



School of Health, Care and Social Welfare

THE UNIONISATION OF PRECARIOUS WORKERS

Representations, problematisation and experiences in Swedish blue-collar unions in the construction and hotel-restaurant sectors

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ABSTRACT

From the Polanyian perspective on the double movement of labour commodification and self-protection of Society, the aim of this study was to examine how unionists perceive and problematise precarious employment and what are their practices for unionising and thereby securing precarious workers. A double case study was conducted in the hotel-restaurant and construction sectors in Sweden with the participation of blue-collar unionists with diverse backgrounds and experiences. The results show that precarious work is associated with labour market segmentation, subcontracting and fragmentation of economic organisations, deskilling of work, loss of autonomy and sometimes over-qualification of workers. Perceived difficulties for unionisation are fear, lack of knowledge of precarious workers about their rights, membership cost, status frustration and lack of interactions with other workers. Reported practices for unionising precarious workers consist of dealing with these barriers in order to build trustful relations and empowering workers through education and inclusion in leadership positions. Actions taken to protect and secure precarious workers are strongly interlinked with their unionisation and seem to rest mainly on negotiations. The main conclusions of the study are that precarious work means a loss of control by workers over their work life stemming from labour commodification and flexibilisation due to increased management control and lack of rights and protections surrounding work. The formation of solidarities needed for unionisation is hindered by the detachment of precarious workers from the work community and by inequality regimes. The domination of fear manifests the prevalence of emotions. Therefore, the care and emotional work of unionists is essential for making workers feel confidence. Unions practices tend to lean also, to some extent, towards organising and community building models. Thereby, union agency appears to be able to engage in an interplay with structures to exert some influence on employment and industrial relations.

Keywords: precarious workers, labour unions, Swedish model, commodification, labour market segmentation, subcontracting, flexibility, fear, organising, community building

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1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Union density has been continuously declining in advanced capitalist countries in the last decades (OCDE.Stat 2020). Unions, through which employees associate to defend together their interests in their relations with employers (Watson 2011:298), may play an important role for the improvement of work conditions; thereby, they provide “public goods” (Ibsen et al. 2017). Thus, the decline in union membership has resulted in dwindling possibilities for employees to rely on unions support, which has made them more vulnerable in their relations with employers, especially when the level of unemployment is high. Besides, unions have been less able to weigh on politicians for promoting egalitarian policies since the 1980s (Scheuer 2011). According to Kalleberg (2013), union decline in industrial societies characterises, alongside privatisation and deregulation, a “neoliberal revolution” that has been ongoing since the 1970s in a context of technological advances and globalisation of trade, competition and production. In combination with a diversification of workforces, these changes have led to increasingly “precarious work” (p. 700). Rather than “capital flight” and increased immigration, a general offensive against unions might be, with deregulation, the cause of increasing precarious employment (Milkman 2006 reviewed by Voss 2008:554). Not only is unions decline a general background and eventually a cause for workers being more and more precarious, furthermore, the “lack of unions” is a defining characteristic of precarious employment (Kreshpaj et al. 2019) and precarious work is associated with lower union density (Ikeler 2019:501). Therefore, the question could be raised whether the unionisation of precarious workers should be considered an oxymoron - or a breach in labour precarity likely to secure workers.

1.2 Aim and research questions

The aim of this study is to explore, from the perspectives of blue-collar unionists, the representations and the problematisation of precarious work and the practices for unionising precarious workers and thereby securing them, in two specific settings that are the construction and hotel-restaurants sectors in Sweden.

The research questions are defined as follows:

- *How is precarious employment perceived and problematised within unions?*
- *What are the difficulties experienced by unions in the unionisation of precarious workers?*
- *Are unions able to secure precarious workers in the context of their unionisation?*

This study is conducted within the field of Work Life Sciences and uses accordingly a multidisciplinary approach to apprehend the multiple dimensions of precarious work in relation to unionisation.

1.3 Literature review

1.3.1 The problematic conceptualisation of precarious employment

The understanding of the implications of precarious employment for the unionisation of workers requires at first to comprehend the very phenomenon of precarious employment, which is a “rather ill-defined” concept (Simms 2017:53). Indeed, there is no consensual definition of precarious employment (Koranyi et al 2018:341, Kreshpaj et al. 2019:2). A negative approach contrasts precarious employment with “stable, long-term, fixed-hour jobs” (Mešić 2017:16). Close to the concept of “contingent work”, precarious work would encompass “casual, fixed-term contract or temporary workers (including those supplied by temporary employment agencies), own-account self-employed subcontractors, teleworkers and home-based workers, including those doing homecare” (Quinlan 2012:4). Thus, precarious employment overlaps strongly with the concept of non-standard employment relationships, defined by the ILO as “(1) temporary employment; (2) part-time work; (3) temporary agency work and other forms of employment involving multiple parties; and (4) disguised employment relationships and dependent self-employment” (ILO 2016:7). However, the two notions are different. Non-standard employment refers to the contractual status that is not systematically precarious whereas precariousness is a characteristic of employment that may also be observed in a context of standard employment (ILO 2016:18). Besides, the concept of non-standard employment is criticised for being gender-biased given that such employment tend not to be atypical for women; besides, the increasing proportion of “non-standard” employment arrangements in general might not make it possible any more to describe them as “non-standard” (Quinlan & Mayhew 1999:491).

The concept of precarious work may be contrasted with non-standard employment in that it includes dimensions related to the experiences of insecurity and lack of social rights. Indeed, precarious work is associated with “instability, lack of protection, insecurity and social or economic vulnerability”

(Rodgers, 1989:5 in Mešić 2017). Insecurity in employment relationships would be the translation of more flexible economic processes (Kreshpaj et al. 2019:1) where risks are more borne by workers (Kalleberg 2013).

A systematic review of the definitions and operationalisations of precarious employment conducted by Kreshpaj et al. (2019) results in the inclusion of three main dimensions. At first, *employment insecurity* refers to contractual relationship insecurity, for instance through indirect employment with the intermediary of agencies or self-employment as opposed to being directly employed. Other aspects of employment insecurity are contractual temporariness, which relates to fixed-term contracts, and contractual under-employment translating into part-time contracts and likely to imply the tenure of multiple jobs in different sectors. The second dimension is *income inadequacy*, referring to the income level “as hourly wage, monthly salary, or annual income”. This includes unstable income in that it may jeopardise the provision of adequate income on the long-term. *Lack of rights and protection* is the third and last dimension, and refers to lack of unionisation, lack of social security based on benefits, lack of regulatory support based on medical and social insurance, and more difficult exercise of workplace rights resulting in greater exposure to unfair treatment (Kreshpaj et al. 2019).

With the notion of “precarariat”, Standing (2016:8) theorises that precarious workers form a social group and, furthermore, a *class-in-the-making*. According to him, the precariat lacks seven forms of labour securities that are associated with the industrial citizenship that unions, social democrats and labour parties aimed to guarantee for the working class in the aftermath of the Second World War. Thus, not only does the precariat lack *employment security*, which equates to the regulation of management discretion especially regarding dismissal, they have no *job security* either, which means that they are subject to functional flexibility and have no opportunity for upward mobility. They have no *labour market security* at the macro level, which means that they have to cope with significant levels of unemployment. They lack *skills reproduction security*, in that they cannot acquire and use skills, and have no access, for instance, to apprenticeships or employment training. They have no *income security*, which does not only refer to precarious and inadequate pay, but more broadly to a particular structure of the “social income”. Beside income from work, the concept of “social income” includes, notably, support from family and/or local community, enterprise and state benefits, private financial benefits – all of which the precariat lacks. At last, the precariat has no *representation security*, which means that they are not collectively organised within, for instance, independent trade unions. On the whole, Standing (2016:11) emphasises that the precariat lacks a “secure work-based identity.” They are denied past and future, they cannot build over time experience and savoir-faire, they have no long-term helpful relationships with fellows, they cannot share with them memory, traditions, code of ethics and, therefore, they do not have a sense of belonging to a solidaristic work community.

1.3.2 Outcomes of precarious employment

Negative health outcomes of precarious employment tend to be more and more highlighted and acknowledged (Kreshpaj et al. 2019:1). Thus, “multiple jobholders and employees of temp agencies or subcontractors at the same worksite” are found to be more exposed to occupational injuries (Koranyi et al. 2018). Precarious employment is a cause of material concerns and isolation and is associated with high levels of stress (Macassa et al. 2017). Discontinuity in occupational roles, which are socially “crucial”, constitutes a fundamental threat exposing workers to “sustained emotional distress” (Siegrist 1996:30). Temporary work, triangular/temporary agency work, home based work, part-time, dependent self-employment, subcontracting and undeclared work are diversely associated with adverse health outcomes such as higher injury rates, higher exposure to bullying and sexual harassment, higher workload, higher fatigue, poor mental health, more frequent sick leaves, higher absenteeism, occupational violence, catastrophic accidents, lack of protection equipment, drug consumption (Quinlan 2015).

Furthermore, according to Standing (2016:22), the precariat experiences “anger, anomie, anxiety and alienation.” Anger comes from frustration because of deprivation and absence of a meaningful future, which has to do, notably, with the impossibility of building “trusting relationships” in the occupational context. Drawing on Durkheim, Standing defines anomie as “a feeling of passivity born of despair” (p.23), and relates it to the constant failure of the precariat to get involved in a meaningful occupational trajectory, in a context of social disapproval. Anxiety stems from fundamental insecurity, and alienation refers to the lack of control over the finality of work. Besides, work insecurity can feed other forms of insecurity through the experience, for instance, of chronic debt. Furthermore, Standing (2016:28) warns that the precariat is “at war with itself.” Indeed, there are tensions between the different and diverse groups of people that make up the precariat. For instance, low wages workers are likely to blame on “welfare scrounger”, and low income natives may feel threatened by migrants taking jobs. Such tensions may have political outcomes favourable to the extreme-right and severely strain democracy.

1.3.3 Theoretical framework: labour commodification and decommodification

According to Polanyi (1957:79), societies in the Western world underwent a “great transformation” in the 19th century following the principle of the self-regulation of markets. Thereby, labour was made a “fictitious commodity” to be sold and bought on labour markets, and wages were to vary flexibly as prices for labour. Polanyi (1957:75) defines “empirically” commodities as “objects produced for sale on the market” and asserts that labour cannot be considered as such. Indeed, labour is nothing else than “human activity which goes with life itself” (p. 75). The utilisation or absence of utilisation of labour impacts

fundamentally workers, in all the dimensions of their being, whether they be physical, psychological and moral. Therefore, the representation of labour as a commodity can only be understood as a fiction. However, the submission of labour to market mechanisms stemming from this fiction has real and harmful consequences for workers, such as “extreme instability of earnings, utter absence of professional standards, abject readiness to be shoved and pushed about indiscriminately, complete dependence on the whims of the market” (p.185). As a result of this lack of security, the status of the worker breakdowns. The whole society, in such a paradigm, is threatened by disintegration for lack of subsistence (p. 239).

Furthermore, Polanyi (1957:38) emphasises that the self-regulation of markets breaks with the historical embedding of markets in society. He refers to anthropological and historical studies that would show that economic motives, especially the search for individual gain and profit, are not the main determinant of human economy. Rather, the preservation of social status is at the core of the relation of people with material goods. Indeed, social ties are essential for survival purposes and “submerge” human economy, that would be fundamentally run by the two main principles of reciprocity and redistribution. The motive of gain and the principles of working with the least effort and only for remuneration are nearly absent and motivations for working have rather to do with personal fulfilment and making relations with others. By contrast, the self-regulation of the market makes it distinct and separate from society. Moreover, society comes to be “embedded” by market rules whose rules dominate social relations (Polanyi 1957:59). This tension between market mechanisms and the most fundamental social needs and principles of life in society makes it impossible to maintain a self-regulated market. As a result of this “impossibility” (Polanyi 1957:25), a double movement characterised societies in the Western world in the 19th century, whereby the expansion of markets economies encountered resistance to the domination of markets rules, especially over land, money and labour. Through measures, policies and institutions, “Society protected itself against the perils inherent in a self-regulating market system” (p. 80). Regarding the protection of labour, these institutions were mainly trade unions and factory law. Trade unions played a pre-eminent role in England, whereas social protection by means of legislation prevailed on the continent (p. 184).

Drawing on Polany, Standing (2016:31) points out a “Global Transformation” ongoing since the late 1970s. Again, the economy has been disembedded from society as a result of neo-liberal policies aimed at creating a “global market economy.” In the context of globalisation that Standing (2016:37) defines as a movement of “commodification,” labour is re-commodified through increasing flexibility of employment relationships to ensure the adjustment of wages to demand and supply on labour markets. The reforms of unemployment benefits that tighten entitlement conditions, shorten their periods and lower benefits ensure that workers are incited to take precarious positions (p. 54). Whereas

Polanyi (1957:81) referred to unions as one of the institutions through which Society protected itself against commodification, Standing (2016:169) does not consider that they could represent the interests of the precariat because they would defend primarily the financial interests of their core members from an economic approach pursuing economic growth. Still, Ibsen & Tapia (2017:177) claim a “Polanyian perspective” when examining unions experiences of revitalisation in a global context of “market enhancement.” Accordingly, unions practices for the unionisation of precarious workers will be apprehended in light of the Polanyian concept of double-movement of commodification and decommodification of labour.

1.3.4 Previous research on the unionisation of precarious workers

Factors hindering the unionisation of precarious workers. Without referring to precarious employment, some descriptive, cross-sectional and longitudinal studies find a negative relation between, on one hand, union density and, on the other hand, part-time and temporary work (Schnabel 2013:260, Nergaard & Aarvaag Stokke 2007:661). Some qualitative studies address more directly the issue of precarious employment and emphasise that such working conditions hinder unionisation (Bergene et al. 2014, Cunningham et al. 2017, Alberti 2016, Ikeler 2019, Pupo & Noack 2014, Refslund 2018, Berthonneau 2017). Especially, turn-over and fixed-term contracts are considered explicitly by some workers and union activists to be obstacles to unionisation (Pupo & Noack 2014, Alberti 2016). Indeed, joining the union may not seem worth it when the contract limits in time the stay in the company, that is perceived too short for expecting anything from the union (Alberti 2016:85). Turn-over is also associated with exit strategies of workers. Then, resignation in the present, because of the lack of other options, combines with uncertainty about the future (Pupo & Noack 2014). The hope for escaping as soon as possible from unbearable working conditions may also fully dominate the immediate perspectives of workers (Alberti 2016:85). According to Ikeler (2019), the flow of exiting workers is a form of “contingency” that suits business models based on flexibility practices. Besides, precarious work may be associated with different contractual status in the context of sub-contracting, which impacts on union activists’ representations and leads them to consider subcontracted workers not to be part of the work community. This, as well as legislation and unions rivalry for coverage, may impede the inclusion of subcontractor workers in the same unions as core workers (Bergene et al. 2014).

Above all, a persistent and dominant theme of precarious workers experiences is the fear of management retaliation in case of any protest about working conditions or behaviour challenging management authority (Alberti 2016:87, Pupo & Noack 2014:344, Cunningham et al. 2017:383, Berthonneau 2017:41). Thus, Alberti (2016:84) describes the actual victimisation of housekeeper informal leaders involved in organising efforts in the hospitality

sector. Anti-union strategies are not necessarily associated with repression but can also consist of “team work ethos” (Ikeler 2019:506) and unitarism, which is an organisational culture based on the metaphor of team or family, and where workers share the ends defined by management (Cunningham et al. 2017). Still, precarious work exposes especially to management retaliation because of more flexible employment relations making easier for employers to terminate or reduce work provision and, therefore, income. Ikeler (2019) names “contingent control” the high level of management discretion on weekly working hours in some retail stores as well as the lack of protection in the event of dismissal. Further, he analyses that the form of contingency associated with flows of exiting workers increases management power because employees who are less durably working in companies are less likely to challenge management authority. Beside the experience of precariousness in the relation with employers, the fear may also stem from belonging to vulnerable social groups. In this regard, Alberti (2019) highlights the constraints of precarious migrant women workers who are “single-parents” and therefore cannot afford being dismissed because they highly depend on their work for fulfilling their family duties.

Indeed, qualitative studies show frequently an over-representation among precarious workers of vulnerable groups in relation to gender, (migrant) origin, “ethnicity”, age, language (Ikeler 2019, Pupo & Noack 2014, Bergene et al. 2014, Cunningham et al. 2017, Alberti 2016). This labour market segmentation can be approached from several theoretical perspectives. One of them considers that employers, by using the “divide-and-rule tactic”, construct the groups that they will disadvantage through restricted access to “good jobs”, career opportunities, training, etcetera. Therefore, they play a determinant role in the formation of inequalities. Another approach that is gender-focused, “feminist-economics”, articulates the processes of production and social reproduction whereby the constructed social role of male breadwinner confines women in periphery status in the labour market. As for the comparative institutionalist approach, it highlights the influence of social actors and institutions – such as educational systems, social protection, gender relations, organisational cultures – on the shaping of segmentation in labour markets that are “socially constructed” (Grimshaw et al. 2017).

In the context of such a segmentation, the unionisation of these workers from vulnerable groups may raise specific difficulties. Lack of knowledge about their labour rights would characterise migrants, women returners and youth (Simms 2017:58). Also, the family duties of precarious women workers may limit their availability for taking part in collective action and feed a fear of “activism burn-out” (Alberti 2016:87). However, it might be then the ‘norm’ against which such ‘specific’ constraints are defined that should be questioned, in other words the organisation of societies and, also, unions. Indeed, unions might replicate inequality regimes where the domination of masculine values marginalises caring activities and, therefore, disadvantages women activists (Acker 2006 in

Kainer 2015). Thus, women's constraints for unionising raise the issues of the disadvantages they have in society, but also, possibly, within unions. When it comes to quantitative studies, they show that women are less likely to unionise than men in Germany, Netherlands, UK, the USA and Canada but they are more unionised than men in the Nordic countries. Besides, the negative effect of being a woman would disappear when controlling for atypical employment (Schnabel 2013). Thus, the relation between gender and unionisation might be mediated by the segmentation of labour markets.

Regarding precarious migrant workers, Refslund (2018) points out that they can earn in the host country a comparatively higher income in comparison with what they could be paid in their country of origin, which would make them less likely to unionise. Besides, they would maintain a symbolic relation with workers in the home country as a "reference group" rather than with workers in the host country. Moreover, migrant workers often are isolated from native workers and workers from other "ethnic" groups. Such a segmentation may be reinforced by sub-contracting. Furthermore, lack of trust in unions may be rooted in negative perceptions of unions in the home country, where they may be associated with corruption and/or inefficiency. For unions in the host country, establishing contacts with unions in the country of origin seems to be difficult. On the other hand, migrant workers may also undergo discrimination by unions in the host country. Also, the type of migration would impact on the level of unionisation. The more migrants are mobile ('transient') and/or commuting with their country of origin, the more difficult they are to organise. By contrast, 'settled' migrants, who work and live permanently in the host country, tend over time to have the same inclination for unionising as natives, to whom they come closer in terms of "frame of reference" (Refslund 2018). Thus, segregation and unstable connection with the host country would carry weight both on representations of possible actions (unionisation) and legitimate claims (income level, etc.), in that they maintain a distinct frame of reference.

Quantitative studies about the unionisation of migrants and foreign-born employees show contrasted results. Arnholtz and Hansen (2013) observe, for instance, that Polish migrants are less unionised than natives in Denmark. In a cross-national comparison of 14 Western European countries, Gorodzeisky & Richards (2013:246) observe also such a differential which they attribute in part to the over-representation of migrants in less unionised sectors and part-time and temporary employment; besides, "organisational security" of unions provided in some countries by state financing and/or single dominant confederation would reduce significantly incentives for the unionisation of migrants (Gorodzeisky & Richards 2013:250). In a cross-national study of 18 countries, Schnabel and Wagner (2007) observe that an individual's probability of union membership is positively or negatively associated with the fact of being native depending on the country. Lee (2005:79) finds a negative relation between international migration and net union density in a cross-sectional time-series analysis of sixteen affluent OECD countries. Conversely, Brady (2007)

observes, in a multilevel model analysis of 18 affluent countries, a positive relation between net migration and the percentage of foreign workers on the one hand, and the probability of unionising on the other hand when including other country-level variables; however, this relation becomes insignificant when excluding these other variables, which leads him to conclude to the absence of relation between immigration and union membership. Thus, it seems there is a difficulty in apprehending the relation between migration and unionisation from a quantitative perspective. Further, these studies do not have the dynamic approach used by Refslund (2018) to apprehend the effect of settlement, over time, on unionisation.

As for the youth, Gasparri et al. (2019:355) highlight, in the case of precarious young retail workers in New York and Milan, “the difficulty [for unions and the workers centre] of holding onto a very transient and mobile workforce”. It is notable that they use exactly the same terms as Refslund (2018) when the latter refers to “mobile” and “transient” migrants. Gasparri et al. (2019:348) describe the retail workforce as “often young, with low occupational attachment”. They explain that young workers have probably more “short-term orientation to retail” (2019:355), which makes it difficult for Italian unions in Milan, and the RAP workers centre in New York, to build long term relations with them. It is specified, in the Italian case, that some of them are students, which could suggest a relation between this status and low occupation attachment, as student work aims to finance studies that might lead to another occupation in the future. However, an explanation of the difficulties for unions of recruiting young workers, without any reference to student status, is that they would have an “exploratory” approach of the labour market and, therefore, weak connections with their first workplaces (Haynes et al. 2005). The positive relation between age and unionisation is also supported by the “rational choice model” where union is regarded as an “experience good” that can only be valued over time (Schnabel 2013). However, these approaches cannot explain “cohorts effects” meaning that newer generations unionise less than the former (Nergaard & Aarvaag Stokke 2007, Schnabel 2013, Haynes et al. 2005), which predicts long-term decline in union density. The assumption that a “rising individualism” would explain such decline is discussed (Schnabel 2013:263). It is argued, on the contrary, that young workers have more positive view of unions than former generations (Brickner et Dalton 2019:486). Haynes et al. (2005:110) find, in a survey conducted in New Zealand, that attitudes towards unions do not differ, or only slightly, depending on age. However, they point out that younger workers, indeed less unionised, are more found in workplaces that are small and, therefore, harder to reach for unions. Nergaard & Aarvaag Stokke (2007) observe in Norway that younger workers, that are also less unionised, have more often temporary employment contracts. Besides, they often work in private services such as retail and restaurants, and many of them work part-time during their studies. The authors assume that higher turn-over among young workers impacts negatively on their unionisation. Atypical work, unemployment and

lower level of training could, also, explain the lower union density among young workers (Haynes et al. 2005). Brickner et Dalton (2019:486) observe, in the case of Halifax, Canada, that young workers often turn to “precarious, low-wage work in the service and retail sectors”. These jobs were formerly - and may still be - considered to be temporary before accessing full-time and long-term employment. However, this precarity has become “long term”, including for young workers who have a university degree. Thus, the short-term becomes a long-term succession of short-terms, and contingency turns into a permanent contingency - which could explain cohorts’ effect.

If the high mobility of young workers - making unionisation more difficult - can be related, notably, to their increasing precariousness, this could lead to question, furthermore, the meaning of the “hyper-mobile” migration pattern pointed out by Refslund (2018) in light of the work conditions of migrants. On this point, Alberti (2016:85) gives the floor to a migrant woman worker in a hotel in London who describes very hard conditions “beyond the human limits” which makes her consider to move away again, in other countries. This mobility across borders echoes the contingency generated by the exit strategy of young workers that Ikeler (2019) describes, in a very different context, as very convenient for business models based on flexibility practice in the retail sector. Thus, it seems possible to highlight common issues for unionisation in the experiences of precarious workers, albeit extremely diverse and marked by the socially constructed ‘otherness’ of women, migrants and the youth.

Strength and weaknesses of unionisation practices. The tactical orientation of unions can have a decisive effect on their capacity to recruit and mobilise members (Gahan & Bell 1999:1). Ibsen et al. (2017:515) emphasise also the importance of the strategies conducted by local union officials. In this regard, Alberti (2016) points out that the lack of confidence in workers and a strategy focused away from them was a cause of failure of a campaign targeting precarious workers in the hospitality sector. Regarding more regular practices, precarious workers with minority background may be insufficiently integrated into union leadership (Bergene et al. 2014). On the other hand, temporary expansion was associated with the empowerment of precarious workers through local teams set up regardless of formal union membership and the identification of charismatic leaders among rank-and-files (Alberti 2016). In a company of the Italian retail sector, zero-hours workers could be mobilised by organising meetings and assemblies, by lowering membership fees and by developing sector-level campaigns with street protests such as sit-ins, flash-mobs, distribution of leaflets, involvement of media. This reinforced the position of unions that could negotiate collective agreements on zero-hours contracts, of which one was submitted to workers through referendum leading to a massive approval. In the end, union density increased to 55% in the company among both permanent and zero-hours workers (Gasparri et al. 2019).

With “community-based learning” (Wright 2013), some unions use community learning centres to reach precarious workers within their communities rather than in workplaces with which these workers may have unstable connections. Thereby, unions can provide learning to non-unionised workers who, therefore, get a positive perception of unions and are more likely to join them later. A successful example is given by some unions in the UK that worked with community learning centres and migrant community organisations to teach English to migrant workers, which led 600 of them to unionise (Wright 2013:8). Training is also an important component of the Retail Action Project (RAP) in New York, that consists of a workers centre initiated by a union in cooperation with a community organisation. Retail workers, a precarious workforce, can join the centre without being union members. They have access there to professional training programmes that include information about workers’ rights. Such a training is aimed, notably, at establishing relations with workers and collecting information about their rights violations in companies, which may lead to reports, campaigns, petitions, collective action, and eventually unionisation. The training provided by the RAP is also intended to shape a professional identity typically missing in the sector (Gasparri et al. 2019). “Job identity”, indeed, is one of the workplace dimensions of class consciousness, according to Ikeler (2019) drawing on Mann (1973).

According to Gasparri et al. (2019), another aspect of the RAP is to address issues beyond the workplace, such as racism, migrants’ rights violations, sexism, police brutality and gentrification. Thus, the “whole person” is considered, which makes it possible to build a relation between workers and the organisation on more durable basis than the only reference to a precarious – “non-lasting” - occupational identity, in a context where young precarious workers tend not to have long-term orientation to retail (Gasparri et al. 2019). Such practices echo the “social unionism” that consists of providing support for issues not related to the labour market, such as taxation, banks and housing. Refslund (2018) describes how such a strategy proved to be useful for gaining the trust of precarious migrant workers in different settings in Denmark. This strategy might have no identity-building purpose but still addresses the multiple dimensions of precariousness that the precarious have to deal with, not only as workers. Another common issue relates to unemployment: Danish unions as well as the RAP workers centre in New York help their members to find a job when they are unemployed (Gasparri et al. 2019, Refslund 2018).

Refslund (2018) also shows that building trust with precarious migrant workers requires a lot of time and involvement of resources from unions. At the beginning, first contacts from workers were facilitated in one case by the reputation of the union in the migrant community, and in the other case by repeated union’s visits in the company, even if they seemed to be without effect at first. In the Danish context, unions could rely on considerable resources associated with strong organisations and collective agreements (Refslund 2018). Thus, the context of industrial relations impacts on the strategies that unions

can implement. Gasparri et al. (2019) highlights the difference between the Italian case, where the weak but socially recognised unions were approached by workers, whereas in New York, professional training and surveys were needed to give and collect information in relation to workers' rights. Furthermore, Gasparri et al. (2019) contrast outcomes and point out an impact less strong in the New York RAP case than in the Italian union mobilisation. Similarly, Refslund (2018) emphasises the better position of "strong unions" - such as in Denmark - for including precarious migrant workers. However, industrial relations are "dynamic", according to Gasparri et al. (2019), and the mobilisations of the RAP work centre should be understood also as a case of "institution-building" that could make it possible to change the game and might have long-term effects.

On the whole, unions practices for organising precarious workers are diverse and multiple depending on context, employment status, social groups involved, surrounding industrial relations patterns. Still, it seems that common components of successful strategies have to do with building relation and trust with precarious workers through "organising" strategies in workplaces and/or community based interventions. Strategies to reach workers involve training and democratic processes that aim for empowerment. Besides, the multiple dimensions of precariousness beyond the workplace are considered. The frame of reference is changed and collective consciousness is shaped through new interactions as soon as precarious workers are not isolated any more. Appeal to media and labour courts can help collective action to reach concrete goals and prove efficiency. Considerable resources of time and energy need to be involved.

1.3.5 The Swedish context

In Sweden, the problem that precarious work represents for unions is pointed out by Kjellberg (2020:9) who observes that blue collars experience a much more pronounced decline in their union density than white collars, which he notably explains, among other reasons, by the greater exposure of the former to precarious employment. Yet, labour precarity might not be expected to prosper in Sweden where the historical "social democratic regime" is characterised by extensive welfare programs that are "highly de-commodifying and universalistic" (Esping-Andersen 1989:26). However, the 'Swedish model' has been under pressure and undergoing deep transformation in the last decades. In a context of higher levels of unemployment, benefits have become less "generous", temporary work has been deregulated (Fleckenstein & Christine Lee 2017:153) and the "new Swedish model" is characterised by more flexibility, segmentation and disciplinary activation policy. The objective of full employment was abandoned by the SAP in 1991 (Belfrage & Kallifatides 2018:891). In 2007, the reform of unemployment funds increased their fees which resulted in accelerating the decline of blue-collars union membership and would have negatively affected the important role of these funds for the

recruitment of precarious workers (Magnusson 2018:7, Bruhn et al. 2013:132). Union density has been declining especially among blue collar workers in the private sector and foreign-born workers. From 2006 to 2019, general union density in Sweden declined from 77% to 68% and the unionisation rates of blue-collar workers decreased from 77% to 60% in all sectors (77% to 51% for foreign-born workers), from 81% to 62% in the construction industry and from 52% to 27% in the hotel-restaurant sector (Kjellberg A. 2020:7, table 1.1 p.14-15, table 24 p.52).

In this context of re-commodification and loss of unions protection, the evolution of precarious employment in Sweden is difficult to apprehend given the lack of consensual definition and measure. From 2008 to 2019, part-time work represents around 24-28% (34-41% for women), and temporary work, 14-16% (17-18% for women) of the total employment in Sweden. In the construction industry, part-timers are around 7-9% (22-38% for women), temporary workers are around 7-8%, and self-employment is around 19-21%. In the accommodation and food services activities, part-timers are around 43-47% (56-58% for women), and temporary workers, around 33-36% (37-42% for women) (Appendix, Table 3). In the whole economy, Jonsson et al. (2019) notices that even though the share of temporary work has remained around 15-17% since the late 1990s, the term of contracts within this category has been shortened and there are increasingly on-demand work and daily contracts. In general, women, the youth and foreign-born workers hold more fixed-term contracts. The proportion of workers holding several jobs is increasing. Atypical workers defined by lack of collective agreement, fixed term contract, temporary agency work, self-employment, multiple job holding and working in the informal sector, would represent 35-39% of workers in Sweden. On the whole, precarious employment is estimated to be growing in Sweden (Jonsson et al. 2019).

2 CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

2.1 Design

For the present study, a qualitative approach was used in order to improve the understanding of the issues related to the unionisation of precarious workers through a particular closeness with participants. Also, the aim was to construct new categories through an iterative process between data collection and analysis (Creswell 2009:206, Aspers & Corte 2019:143). A multiple case study was conducted with two Swedish LO (Lands Organisationen)-affiliated blue collar unions, Byggnads in the construction sector and Hotell-ochRestaurangFacket (HRF) in the hotel-restaurant sector. Thus, the study was bounded by organisational limits (Baxter & Jack, 2008:545) and centred on the

problematic issue of the unionisation of precarious workers (Creswell 2007:73). The choice of two unions in different sectors was aimed at exploring differences and similarities in results (Baxter & Jack, 2008:548) and seeking for generalisability (Creswell 2007:76). Indeed, the cases were studied from an instrumental perspective (Baxter & Jack, 2008:545) to apprehend the implications of precarious work for unions in general.

2.2 Participants and selection

A central representative was interviewed at first in each of the two unions that were contacted through the official contacts available on their website. Then, other contacts were provided by interviewees in the course of the study through a “snowball method” which defines a “respondent driven sampling” (Arnholtz & Hansen 2013:405). Thereby, the sample was selected purposely (Baxter & Jack, 2008:556) in light of the aim of the study. Also, the purpose was to hear “different voices” (Creswell 2007:206) about diverse experiences likely to “shed light” on the various aspects of the object of the study (Graneheim & Lundman 2004:109). In Byggnads, two ombudsmen from a local union of Byggnads, who were foreign-born and especially involved in organising migrants, participated in the study. Two other interviewees were young unionists (<30 years old) from the youth committee and another one was a woman unionist from the women network of the union. In HRF, interviews were conducted with an ombudsman from a local union and, besides, three unionists working at their workplace or recently dismissed who had or used to have local union assignments for workers representation and/or education. Two of these three participants were women, among which one migrant with temporary work permit and the other one had been previously part-timer for 10 years. The other one was a foreign-born worker. On the whole, there were 11 participants (6 from Byggnads and 5 from HRF), among which 5 women (1 from Byggnads, 4 from HRF), 2 young workers (all from Byggnads) and 4 foreign-born workers (2 from HRF, 2 from Byggnads)

2.3 Material and data collection

Interviews were conducted in April and May 2020, usually by phone or video-conference due to the corona pandemic and in some cases the distance. Only one of them was face-to-face, on the request of the participant. Participants were interviewed individually and in English with two exceptions. At first, one of the participants, from HRF, translated English-Swedish during the exchanges with another participant from the same union. This ‘translator participant’ also expressed himself about his experience and opinion in this “group interview.” The other exception concerns an interview with a participant from Byggnads that was conducted in Swedish. For these two interviews, questions had been

previously translated into Swedish. On the whole, interviews lasted around 1 hour except two interviews that were longer than 2 hours. They were all recorded and verbatim transcribed. Moreover, exchanges of questions and replies were done by email with several participants.

The same interview guide, drawing on the “state of art”, was used in the two first interviews with central representatives, in each union, and addressed generally the situation of precarious workers in the branch, expected trends given the ongoing economic crisis, unions strategies to enrol them, to protect them and to tackle precariousness, and the relations of the union with unemployed workers. In following interviews, many questions were still the same to apprehend the diversity of experiences and representations on common issues and to reach potentially data saturation allowing generalisations (Saunders et al. 2018:1899). However, some questions were more focused depending on the background and specific experiences of participants. Some emerging and unexpected topics were included in following interview guides through an iterative process (Pope et al. 2000:114). The interviews were semi-structured to limit influence on participant’s narratives and enable them to express spontaneously (Creswell 2007:215).

Empirical material also included brochures and fliers communicated by some participants, unions websites, press articles on the Internet, the collective agreement in each of the branches and labour legislation. These multiple data sources ensure credibility (Baxter & Jack, 2008:554) and triangulation of data for corroboration (Creswell 2007:208).

2.4 Data analysis

A content analysis was conducted by dividing transcribed interviews and complementary written replies from participants into units that were manually coded. As a result, 371 codes were found and were systematically aggregated to form 15 categories and 3 themes within which the findings from the other empirical materials could be included as well.

Themes	Categories
Perception and problematisation of precarious employment	Definition of precarious employment. Precarious employment in the hotel-restaurant sector. Precarious employment in the construction sector. Segmentation of the labour market. Small firms, big firms. Deskilling, loss of autonomy, over-qualification. Consequences of precarious employment on work conditions
Difficulties for the unionisation of precarious workers	Fear and code of silence. Lack of knowledge and awareness of precarious workers about their contractual situation, their rights and unions. Divisions, separation and lack of interactions. The cost of union membership. Status frustration: they want “to be something else.”
Practices for the unionisation of precarious workers	Dealing with divisions, building and maintaining a trustful and meaningful relation. Empowering with education and inclusion in leadership positions. Making precarious workers safer in the context of their unionisation

Thus, beyond the initial deductions from previous research that guided data collection, the results of the analysis were formed through a process of “analytic induction” grounded in collected data (Okasha 2002:20, Pope et al. 2000:115). Direct quotations from the interview fully conducted in Swedish were translated in English. The transcriptions, the analysis of results and the discussion were sent to all participants for “member checking” to ensure credibility through a participatory approach of validation (Creswell 2007).

2.5 Ethical considerations

The protection of participants required by ethics was guaranteed by informing them before interviews were conducted that they had the right to withdraw at any time and without any explanation. They orally consented to the study by their free and informed participation. No authorisation was required from an ethical committee. Anonymity was guaranteed by the absence of any mentions of personal information in the records, the transcriptions and the written report of the study. Furthermore, the report was de-identified by limiting as much as possible the information related to the backgrounds of participants to what was strictly needed for the analysis (Swedish Research Council 2017). At last, there are no conflicts of interests to report and the study was not ordered by any person, company or external funding.

3 CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS

3.1 Perception and problematisation of precarious employment

3.1.1 Definition of precarious employment

The participants generally agree with the definition of precarious employment that was proposed: “non standard employment such as fixed-term contracts, temporary work, part-time work, self-employment, that is associated with income insecurity (i.e., insufficient working hours) and/or job insecurity (risk of contract termination).” One participant refers also to unwritten contracts and the absence of pay slips. In both sectors, informal and shadow economy is considered to be an issue.

Several participants emphasise the vulnerability of migrant workers vis-à-vis their employer when they work with temporary work permit or as posted

workers, regardless of the terms of their contract. Indeed, posted workers may be sent back home by their employer which is then a major disruption in work. The loss of their job by migrant workers with temporary work permit may result in the revocation of their permit if they do not find a new job within three months. During the four years they have to wait for a permanent permit, “they cannot oppose to anything.” Also, during the first 24 month, the temporary work permit is only applicable to the specific employer and occupation mentioned in the decision¹, “they can’t leave, they are tied to their employer, that makes them precarious.” Undocumented workers are also described as lacking any safety and extremely precarious vis-à-vis their employer. Thus, the legal frame defining the status of migrant and posted workers may make the employment relation precarious even if it only surrounds the contract. A participant mentions the case of migrant workers who have long-term contracts but extremely poor working conditions (overwork, night work, no payment, etc.) that he considers to be precarious. Also, the theme of skills was recurrent and one participant, about young construction workers who have not been educated at construction school, defines precarious employment in direct relation to the lack of skills.

3.1.2 Precarious employment in the hotel-restaurant sector.

The level of precarious work in the hotel-restaurants sector, encompassing notably part-time and short-term contracts, is estimated at 40%-45%. It would have been increasing over a long period of time - but not in the last years. There has “always” been the possibility to employ people for a short time in the collective agreement, because “we have that kind of work,” a participant explains. The collective agreement makes it possible to employ workers through an “employment for individual days” under certain conditions² and, often, employers do not respect those conditions and misuse this contract. In the aftermath of a change in legislation in 2007 on time-limited employment, more precarious workers have been observed. Some participants mention a state contribution that employers receive when they employ workers who have been unemployed for a long time. Often, employers use fixed-term contracts for one year which correspond to the maximum time for that contribution, and then they end the employment and hire another worker with the same contribution. Thus, precarious employment is mainly problematised with regard to the misuse by employers of the collective agreement, as well as legislative facilities for flexible practices for short term contracts. On the whole, the level of turnover is high. A participant emphasises that workers with short-term contracts “in the eyes of the employer can be replaced at any second.”

1 <https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/Private-individuals/Working-in-Sweden/Employed/Changing-jobs.html>

2 Collective Bargaining Agreement, 1 April 2017-31 March 2020, §4 1.2, p.7-8

As for part-time, it would generally be not below 75% in relation to the migration law requiring that migrants are employed with a minimal income³, which implies a minimal work time depending on the hourly wage. Nonetheless, there is no regulation in general of the minimal length of working hours, and zero hours contracts are observed in the fast food industry. A participant estimates that almost 50% of workers are part-timers. In this context of normalisation of precarious employment, a central issue relates to what, then, is standard employment. Thus, a participant asserts, “we need to make sure that the full-time job and the continuous job is the normal.” In this context, there is also instability due to inter-sectoral movements of workers, and the union reports that 10 000 out of 30 000 members quit the branch after one year.

Participants also mentions that some works are subcontracted, especially housekeeping and, to some extent, dish-washing. Subcontracting has negative effects due to downward pressure on wages and work conditions through competition, and is also analysed as a strategy used by companies to bypass the collective agreement for flexibility purposes.

3.1.3 Precarious employment in the construction sector

Unlike the hotel-restaurants sector, the construction industry is not considered to be, on the whole, precarious. A participant highlights that the Swedish construction industry has high social standards in comparison with other countries, “the UK is quite a similar country to Sweden, but when I looked at the conditions where they were working you know, no safety no stuff like that, they had no harness they had nothing, and I asked them their pay, they had half that I have.” In a context of high level of union density, safe employment relations would be ensured by the coverage of most of the sector by the collective agreement that makes long-term and full-time employment a general rule. One exception is the 6 month trial contract that employers hardly use in time of full-employment because workers are then able to refuse such conditions. The sector has benefited from full-employment in the last ten years. Another important exception concerns construction cleaners who have long-term but possibly part-time employment. Other exceptions are restrictive and would be rarely applicable⁴.

However, some companies may not have the collective agreement or break it in the absence of local union presence likely to ensure compliance with its rules. Notably, the collective agreement provides that head contractors that have the collective agreement should only contract with subcontractors that have it as well, which may not be respected. Thus, in the last 10 years, precarious

³ Applicants to the work permit need to prove that they will work “to an extent that will result in a salary of at least SEK 13000 per month before taxes”

<https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/Private-individuals/Working-in-Sweden/Employed/Work-permit-requirements.html>

⁴ The Construction Agreement, 1 May 2017–30 April 2020, 2. Working hours, APPENDIX A1, 3-5 The contract of employment

employment has been mainly increasing at the margins of the collective agreement, “particularly in the lower levels of long chains of subcontractors” and a participant explains that even though “in theory [subcontractor workers] are not precarious workers regarding full-time or part-time, (...) in actual life they are hiding it from us.” Subcontracted works in logistics, demolition, and scaffold building are especially affected. Subcontracting is considered, in the sector, to be a process of specialisation but for a participant, the competition between subcontractors is mainly aimed at lowering prices.

Besides, temporary agency work is increasing as well and tends to pay lower salaries even though the European Union (EU) law states that temporary workers should have equal pay and “equal treatment”.⁵ As for posted-workers, even if their employer has signed the collective agreement, it is difficult to ensure that they have long-term and full-time employment because they only work for limited periods in Sweden and “many times it is impossible to know if they receive anything when they are at home.”

“Bogus self employment” has also been increasing in the last ten years and concerns Swedish workers as well. Self-employed workers do not benefit from the labour legislation nor from the collective agreement. They would choose, when unemployed, to continue to work under this status because of the “very low” level of unemployment benefits. Besides, this is common that companies in Sweden ask workers from Eastern Europe to register their own companies in their home country, which they place as a condition for providing work to them, in order to avoid social security contributions and the responsibilities they would have as employers. Thus, these workers “are forced, ie. without starting their own company, they get no job.” Thus, self-employment is, in reality, “dependent” and disguises an employment relationship.

3.1.4 Segmentation of the labour market

In the hotel-restaurant sectors, migrants, women, and young workers are all over-represented in precarious work. The particular vulnerability of migrant women with children is emphasised. About young workers, a participant thinks that both students and young workers who have finished school are concerned and comments, “I think it is quite natural not to get a full time employment when... There is a kind of natural law that you should have this insecure employment.” About women, “a lot of them do not work full-time” neither, and this is for a participant a “feminist” issue. They are more exposed to short-term work also. Migrant women, especially from Asia, are commonly found in the subcontracted housekeeping work where they often work part-time.

In the construction industry, precarious employment is mainly problematised with reference to the vulnerability of foreign-born workers. More precisely, “in

⁵ Directive 2008/104/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 November 2008 on temporary agency work 5.1 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32008L0104>

the beginning of EU expansion the Polish workers were exploited but at present time it is the Lithuanian, Belarus, Ukraine, Portuguese, Uzbekistan, Romanian workers that have the worst conditions." Precarious migrant workers are less likely to benefit from the high level of protection provided by the collective agreement. Indeed, they seem to be mainly employed by subcontractors and to have little access to big Swedish companies, which might be due to the language barrier according to a participant. The two processes of subcontracting and internationalisation of the labour market may be overlapping but subcontracting would have begun first in the 1980s-1990s. The internationalisation of the labour market has been ongoing since the 2000s and is considered to put pressure on the Swedish model. In a context of full-employment in the last decade, migrants have made an essential contribution to the industry, "if we did not have any thousands of foreigners working in Sweden right now, we could not build all those houses, bridges and hospitals." There is nonetheless among some native workers a fear of their replacement by low wages foreign-born workers, and a participant is afraid that "if we cannot secure equality", such a situation "would put an extreme strain on our democracy in Sweden."

Another group affected by precarious employment, albeit more discreetly, are young unskilled workers. The youth in the construction industry seems to be, in general, very safe in comparison with the hotel-restaurants sector for instance. This is attributed to the collective agreement that secures, in general, long-term and full-time employment, to strong local union presence and to a long vocational training in construction schools in three years. Besides, trainees have 6800 working hours of apprenticeship, and they accomplish 4000 of them after they have completed their education at school. During this additional educational period of nearly two and half a year, they acquire a strong experience making them desirable on the labour market. Even though young educated construction workers may be exposed to some form of precariousness, in relation for instance to the six month trial contracts, they are not considered to be, in general, precarious and the mainly concerned are rather the uneducated young workers. The latter do "mini labour" that consists of carrying and cleaning. They are mainly found in subcontractors or staffing companies, in big construction sites in the big cities like Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö or, on the contrary, in very small construction sites.

Women are not numerous in the construction industry but the sector has been undergoing feminisation to some extent. There are 1,4% of construction workers and 13% of carpenters who are women. They are not considered to be precarious, which is mainly attributed to the collective agreement. However, they are over-represented in the cleaning staff for which the collective agreement makes an exception to the general rule of full-employment. For these workers, part-time "10-15 hours a week is common." Beside issues related to collective bargaining coverage, women are, thus, particularly subject to precarious employment through part-time in the cleaning work.

3.1.5 Small firms, big firms

The relation between establishment size and precarious employment is discussed. In each of the sectors, some participants consider that precarious employment can equally be found in small and big firms. One of them, from Byggnads, highlights different 'models' of precarity economy with, on the one hand, large international companies that post skilled workers mainly from Eastern EU, and on the other hand, small firms that target the private construction market and maintenance work. The latter employ migrant workers and unskilled workers who have economic support from the Swedish unemployment agency. However, the situation of posted workers would have been relatively improved because they work in big construction sites where there are union representatives, whereas the union is less present in small construction sites where migrants work. Other participants in each of the two unions estimate that workers tend to be more precarious in small firms, even though not all small firms are bad firms, in relation, notably, to better bargaining coverage and union monitoring of bigger firms and workplaces. Thus, an effect of the establishment size and workplace is suggested and explained by the organisation level of the union. However, it seems that this effect encounters the other effect of transnational strategies deployed by companies with the posting of workers that disrupt the national frames within which unions are organised.

3.1.6 Deskillling, loss of autonomy, over-qualification

The theme of skills and autonomy emerged early and unexpectedly with a participant from Byggnads, who considers that the most important tasks in his organisation for dealing with the risk in the future of increased unemployment and precariousness is "to train well skilled and well educated professionals in our industry." This theme was then discussed with participants in both unions.

Precarious work is perceived as unskilled by several participants. When asked to define what unskilled work means, a participant from Byggnads refers to "the easier tasks at the construction site. You carry, you clean..." These tasks are accomplished mainly by workers employed by subcontractors that are migrants, and to a lesser extent, young unskilled workers without education from construction schools and workers who have economic support from the Swedish unemployment agency. He mentions also that migrant workers may accomplish a wide range of tasks whereas Swedish workers are more specialised by professions (concrete, carpenter, etc.). On the other hand, several other participants from Byggnads and HRF indicate that precarious workers do the same work.

A distinct issue has to do with the skills of workers. On that point, a participant from HRF indicates that "the precarious worker often does not have any experience." This is contrasted with the education in three years of some

professionals like chef, waiter, receptionist, tourist-guide, bartender, bakery, pastry-chef. Conversely, workers like fast-fooders and cashiers have no previous education, “they can learn at work (...) Anyone can do the job.” Thus, precarious work appears to overlap with occupational positions that do not benefit from previous education.

In Byggnads, several participants emphasise that Swedish construction workers are highly skilled due to their long education at construction schools and apprenticeship. Therefore, they are able to work with a lot of autonomy. This autonomy is, indeed, exceptional. Within companies, workers affiliated to the union – which most of them are – elect a team leader, the “lagbas”⁶ who is trained by the union and exerts some supervision of the work at construction sites. There is still a supervisor “from the company”, the “platschef”, but they mainly “make sure that the delivery of materials and stuff like that goes on and they make sure that everyone has help on things as well.” The skills of Swedish workers are considered to be demonstrated by their important autonomy and their general understanding of processes that are contrasted with the supervision observed for some precarious workers, which is interpreted by a participant as a “need” for directives due to lack of professional knowledge. A high level of supervision of the precarious work is also observed by another participant regarding especially Polish workers, “work management differs markedly from the Swedish, less influential in their work. It is always the boss who decides and tells them what to do. The organization is very hierarchical in the Polish companies.” In the hotel-restaurant sector, this is also noticed for instance regarding housekeeping, “the hotel workers are having their managers checking in and seeing exactly everything they do.”

However, high supervision does not necessarily mean that workers are less skilled. A participant from Byggnads explains, about the Polish, that there are workers without education but also very competent workers. The main difference with Swedish workers is that they cannot complain about their work conditions. As for housekeeping, a participant from HRF who works in this position indicates that she has a Bachelor degree in “Business Administration” from her home country and that has been reviewed by the Swedish Council for Higher Education. Also, she has met many highly educated migrants working in the cleaning work in hotels. Another participant from HRF explains that some workers who “apply for positions for example in the cleaning department, they deliberately omit the fact that they have higher qualifications because they do not want to be seen as overqualified for the positions.” Also, a participant from Byggnads questions the concept of skills, “what do you mean by skills?” According to him, precarious workers have different but still valuable skills because they are able to adjust labour processes, by fixing their equipment for instance, without the technology and resources that Swedish workers have available. Thus, precarious workers may show skills allowing them to adapt to their work environment providing poor resources. They may also be very

⁶ <https://www.byggnads.se/regioner/ost/medlem/fortroendevald/lagbasackordstagare/>

competent if not over-qualified, albeit confronted to tight supervision... like, maybe, core and well-educated workers as well, through a process whereby they might be losing autonomy and undergoing precarisation.

Indeed, a participant from Byggnads indicates that even though workers in construction sites have a lot of autonomy, management control has been increasing in the last period. He remembers a time when it was possible for workers to choose the most convenient materials for their health, for instance boards less heavy to carry, but this is “unheard-of today.” Autonomy means for him well-being and the possibility of learning skills, “you learn a lot by doing and deciding yourself and not just listening, because in the end of the day we become just more like robot, and they tell us what to do and that freedom and that autonomy that we had like, let’s say, 15 years ago, that’s been disappearing.” Furthermore, he analyses that the process of specialisation in the construction industry de-skills new generations of construction workers, “even if they still come from the construction schools, they have less skills because they can learn less at work,” which is not contradictory with the observation of another participant that “the school has very much increased the level of education for construction workers.” Here, specialisation is observed within the profession and differs from the specialisation of Swedish workers by professions – carpenter, concrete, etc. – mentioned earlier.

As a result of these evolutions, new generations of worker are weaker on the labour market when they need to find a new job and they have, also, a weaker position of bargaining. Indeed, “if you only can do one thing, and they can get rid of you any day, because someone from the street can learn this in two weeks, that is a weak position of bargaining.” This participant considers that this is a strategy of employers for making workers and the union weaker, and he refers to the words he got from a representative of employers, “in 20 years, you will see 20 firms doing 20 different things instead of you doing those 20 things, just watch and see.” Thus, labour demand from companies more than labour supply might account for the process of de-skilling and loss of autonomy that is associated with precarious work. This process has not only to do with the primary access to education but also with the experience that can be acquired at work. The concept of skills might not relate mainly to the nature of tasks but to their articulation and to the organisational context in which they are fulfilled, with more or less knowledge and autonomy.

3.1.7 Consequences of precarious employment on work conditions

Beside inherent characteristics related to income and job insecurity, precarious employment is generally associated with worsened work conditions regarding remuneration, health and safety, as precarious workers cannot complain and are “silent.” In hotel housekeeping, which is a work characterised by subcontracting and migrant women work, they “hav[e] like 32 to 25 rooms a day to clean! And it takes on the body to do that.” About posted workers in the construction

industry, a participant from Byggnads describes their condition in these terms, “they are working 7 days a week from the sun goes up until the sun goes down (...) They are working too much. That’s dangerous! If you work at construction sites with heavy work, and if you work 10, 12, 14 hours a day, 7 days a week, accidents will happen.” Moreover, this extreme prolongation of the work day lowers the real hour pay rate and thereby bypasses the off-site monitoring exerted by unions for checking the compliance of individual agreements with the collective agreement. As for migrants, “they live in very poor conditions in suburbs” and may work “ten to twelve, 14 working hours a day.” Besides, migrants may pay to obtain employment which is described as “job trafficking.” Another participant who worked more especially with precarious workers from Eastern Europe explains that “their jobs / duties were different from those of the Swedes, usually heavier jobs and long working days.” Besides, they had lower wages (20-40%) and generally a worsened work environment. A participant who is working on the case of workers from a Baltic country describes lack of pay, long working hours, night work, water problems in their accommodation, no days of rest, which limits their freedom to move around, and general work overload. As for young uneducated construction workers, a participant emphasises that often they lack safety equipment and supervision for ensuring their protection. Also, the competition between subcontractors is considered to have an effect opposite to the one that could be expected from a competition based on innovation, skills and technical progress. Rather, a regression is observed, “professions that left in the 1970s are reappearing, like migrant workers who carry all the heavy equipment, it is not a sound development in the construction industry.”

3.2 Difficulties for the unionisation of precarious workers

3.2.1 *Fear and code of silence*

Participants generally agree that precarious workers are difficult to reach for unions, which is explained at first by their fear and a code of silence. About migrant and posted workers, a participant from Byggnads describes how they are afraid of talking to the union when they can be met at construction sites, which leads the union to unfold particular communication strategies to bypass the surveillance of supervisors with tiny fliers, “you know there is a code of silence, they look down, they listen but they do not show to us that they are listening, and there are always supervisors for the precarious, for the out-posted and migrant workers. They are always afraid, they do not want to show their employer that they want this information, and that they want to join the union, and sometimes we even have the information in a small piece of paper that fits

in your hand. They do not want to show their employer that they are talking to the union, because then they could be said, then go home...”

Those of the posted workers who would dare to join the union are exposed to the sanction of being sent back to the home country. A participant indicates that some companies threaten workers from Eastern Europe, if they contact the union, to make it impossible for them to work in all Europe where they have contracts, which would end up with them being unemployed workers in their country. According to another participant, this blacklisting is not common in Sweden but foreign companies behave this way sometimes. Young uneducated construction workers are also afraid because “if they stand up for their rights (...) they would lose their job.” This fear has to be understood in view of restricted access to unemployment benefits because of discontinuity in work, and lacking skills that make it difficult for them to find work in other companies.

In the hotel-restaurants sector, precarious workers are “afraid.” Young precarious workers as well as migrant women with children “need their income, that’s it.” Therefore, they ‘prefer’ to ensure they have work the following day rather than making a case. The risk of management retaliation is particularly high for the workers who have an “employment for individual days” and whose agreement can be immediately terminated in the event of an intervention from the union. Therefore, they “do not want to make any problem” and often explain that they will join the union only when they have more secure employment. Furthermore, there is also a code of silence, “when you are a temporary worker, or more or less, not safe in it, you are a silent worker as well.” General hostility from management vis-à-vis unions as well as closeness of the work environment, meaning that workers cannot talk to each other, may also cause fear and hinder unionisation. About migrants, “if they are causing trouble they are very scared to be shipped back.” Besides, they may come from countries where “it is equal to jail to join the union, even worse, then you are very scared of the conflict.”

A participant from HRF mentions that precarious women workers are unionised but “silent.” They do not ask for the help of the union “because they are scared about the consequences.” In general, “if they are a member, a lot of precarious workers definitively will not want their employer to know they are a member.” If unionisation is defined as the movement of society for protecting itself from a Polanyian perspective, the silence of these unionised workers, especially women, is not less problematic than the silence of the ones who are not unionised.

3.2.2 Lack of knowledge and awareness of precarious workers about their contractual situation, their rights and unions

Many participants from both unions explain that the lack of knowledge of precarious workers about their rights make them less likely to unionise. Knowledge and awareness may also be lacking concerning the role of the union. A participant from HRF who used to have precarious employment in the first 10

years of her working life explains that then she “knew almost nothing about the union and no one around me talked about it. Therefore, it was not natural for me to become a member before I got my full-time job.” Another problem is that precarious workers are not necessarily aware of the implications of their precarious employment and they ask too late for the help of the union, once the contract is terminated, whereas only previously would the union have been able to take action for transforming the contract into a safe employment. A participant from HRF also mentions individual fleeing strategies of some young workers, “*this employer, if he treats me badly, I can go to the next hotel.*” According to him, these workers may not be aware of the importance of safe employment due to the abundance of positions in the sector and they did not anticipate, in particular, the rise in general unemployment that can result from an economic crisis such as the corona-crisis.

3.2.3 Divisions, separation and lack of interactions

Employment in different workplaces and companies. Diverse forms of divisions within the work community may make it difficult for unions to interact with precarious workers and to build a relation with them. At first, precarious workers may work in different workplaces and companies. In the construction industry, migrant workers are observed to be often employed in different construction sites where they are not mixed with Swedish workers. This is more likely that there is no companies covered by the collective agreement on such construction sites, and unions do not have, therefore, any rights to access those workplaces. Besides, separation may be due to employment in different companies at the same workplace. About migrant construction workers, a participant highlights that their employment, often, in subcontractors limits their interactions with Swedish workers. Regarding part-timer women doing the cleaning work in construction sites, they may work also in other workplaces that furthermore are in the remit of other unions, which complicates their organisation.

In the hotel-restaurant sector, a participant estimates that the propensity of migrant workers to join the union is lower in smaller workplaces because it is less probable that they can be approached by a union. Therefore, unions are unable to counterweight the unitarist discourse of some employers that may dissuade workers from unionising, “*here we are a family, and I am the boss and you are here in Sweden because of my kindness to give you employment.*” In this sector, also, separation may be observed between companies within workplaces, in relation to the subcontracting of housekeeping notably.

Time discontinuities. Separation is also apprehended in time. In the case of workers with short-term contracts, a participant from HRF reports that some of them do not consider that it would be in their interest to unionise because they lack “connection with the workplace” and they are likely to be unemployed in

the short-term, situation in which the union would not be able to help them. Also, the union can hardly build a relationship with them for lack of ever knowing whether they will still be back in the workplace the “next week.” Indeed, “a precarious worker you don’t know if they are coming back.”

The same difficulty does not emerge with part-timers, even though reduced working hours, less likely to significantly overlap with the working hours of other workers, may limit interactions. However, part-time is said to be usually not less than 75% in the hotel-restaurants sector, which might still preserve a daily period during which part-timers are present at the same time as other workers in the workplace. However, when it comes to subcontracted sectors, working hours are said to be a barrier to contacts with housekeepers in hotels and with construction cleaners in construction sites. These workers in both occupations are mostly part-timers, which could suggest difficulties related to discontinuities in time due to part-time employment.

In the construction sector, the union hardly exerts “control” on working conditions in temporary agencies whose workers can be removed “from one day to next.” Also, posted workers and migrant workers that do not settle in the host country experience disruption in time problematic for unionisation. For posted workers, service provision completion equates with leaving the country and membership termination. Migrant workers usually settle in the host country but those who are commuting back and forth with the home country rarely have contacts with the union.

Language barrier. The language barrier, which concerns specifically foreign-born workers, is highlighted by many participants in both unions. In the construction sector, a participant mentions the multiplication of languages in the last decades in the context of internationalisation of the labour market, “in 1986 there were only Swedish and Finnish speaking construction workers, nowadays we need to communicate in Polish, Baltic, Russian, Spanish, Serb, and Arabic languages.” In the hotel-restaurant sector, “we have Mongolian, we have Tai, and Spanish, Russian, Bengali...”

The language difference is experienced as a barrier to organising workers. For instance, when Byggnads blocked the Latvian construction company Laval in Vaxholm in order to compel it to sign a collective agreement⁷, the communication with the Latvian workers was difficult because “one, we could not talk the language, two, we could not explain how the Swedish trade unions work.” In the hotel-restaurant sector, a participant indicates that the language barrier is indubitably an important issue. Some participants also mention that workers as well as some union officers may have difficulties in communicating in English. Furthermore, not only is communication about content information, for which English might be enough in some cases, it is also about being included in the work community, for which the host country language - Swedish - is necessary, “it is about being one in the group.” In that sense, it appears that the

⁷ <https://www.etuc.org/en/laval-case-vaxholm>

lack of command of the host country language limits daily interactions with the worker community that would be likely to underpin interactions with, more especially, the union.

Foreign-born workers have the possibility, in Sweden, to take Swedish courses with SFI (Svenska för Invandrare). However, a participant from HRF explains that migrant workers may not have the time nor the financial resources to take these courses that are free but implies to be on a status leave without income. Two groups of workers would be mainly concerned, housekeepers and dishwashers.

No right for meetings in the absence of collective agreement. The lack of collective agreement is an important difficulty for the unionisation of precarious workers, because then there is no right for unions, especially, to access the workplace and to organise meetings there. In this context, the union may still go to the workplaces, but there are no legal rights to enter them and to interact with workers who, besides, may misunderstand the union's visit, confuse them with authorities and be afraid. In the construction sector, a participant also mentions difficulties for visiting construction sites and the opposition of some companies to meetings between the union and workers.

Mental representations. Unionisation may be hindered by negative representations of unions, which concerns, according to participants, mainly migrant and posted workers. Indeed, unions may be associated with oppression and corruption in view of historical experiences in other countries. However, representations are not always negative in reference to unions in the host country. A participant from Byggnads reports that older generations of Polish workers used to have very strong expectations vis-à-vis Byggnads because they had an image of Solidarnosc as a strong union ready for strike, whereas the Swedish negotiation model means that negotiations are at first engaged and may take time.

Regardless of references to the host country, a participant from Byggnads emphasises that the main difficulty for organising workers would be the lack of trust, whereas "if they trust me, I can organise them." Another participant mentions also that precarious migrant workers may be divided within their work community and that some employers pay some of them for reporting discussions within groups of workers, especially talks about unions. Thus, an important issue for the union is also to build solidarity between precarious workers.

Representations from the work community and unions members vis-à-vis precarious workers may also be problematic. Thus, a participant from HRF explains that there might be "a class difference" between on the one hand precarious workers who may be less educated, not Swedish-speaking, from abroad, and on the other hand, "full time workers as a server or a bartender." She refers to divisions along the lines of age, origin, ethnicity. Such divisions are manifest in some companies, and can be observed among members also. Also,

there may be a lack of confidence from the union in precarious workers for taking responsibility and organising. Moreover, some participants from Byggnads indicate that some native workers may find it convenient that migrant workers do the “unskilled work” or they may be afraid of their replacement by these workers, which suggests divisions not favourable for inclusion and collective action.

Formal barriers. Self-employed workers in the construction industry cannot join the union. The benefit of allowing their membership is under study in Byggnads following a decision of their Congress. Besides, foreign-born workers who do not have a ‘personal number’ from authorities (Skatteverket) cannot be members of the union. Undocumented workers especially are likely to be concerned (however, posted workers can be registered with their ID number from their original country if they do not have a temporary number from Skatteverket).

3.2.4 The cost of union membership

The cost of fees is mentioned as a barrier to the unionisation of precarious workers in relation to their income insecurity and low wages. A participant from HRF indicates that “they think it is too expensive to join the union.” Another participant assumes that the durability of membership of those of the precarious who are members might be impacted by the high variability characterising their income even though this membership would be generally durable. A participant from Byggnads explains that uncertainty about future income makes it “very hard to accept that you have to give almost 5% of your pay to the union” and that this money might be needed “for something else more important like food.”

3.2.5 Status frustration: they want “to be something else”

The theme of status frustration emerged with one participant from HRF, about the youth. He estimates that half workers in the hotel-restaurant sector are not older than 25 years. These workers have this job during their studies or just after they completed school, “waiting to be something else.” He relates how one of these young workers refused to join the union while explaining that he had a project for leaving soon the sector and going abroad, which he had still not achieved when he was met again by the union, “often people have dreams but they never... they get stuck in the business.”

3.3 Practices for the unionisation of precarious workers

3.3.1 *Dealing with divisions, building and maintaining a trustful and meaningful relation*

Ensuring local union presence in workplaces. Building a relation with precarious workers is at first done in workplaces when there is local union presence. In the hotel-restaurant sector, a participant highlights the importance of the direct contact with precarious workers for recruiting them. Daily interactions are mainly informal and the lunch break room seems to be the main common place where it is possible to talk to each other. Local union presence in the workplace is also important for having knowledge about the work environment. According to a participant from HRF, the number of trade union officers in workplaces should be increased. A present difficulty is that many of them have been laid-off because of the corona crisis, nearly 40% in her county, which makes it necessary “to start over again” after it took “about 6 years to increase the trade union officers at the workplace.”

In the construction industry, the union has the right to visit construction sites when at least one company has the collective agreement⁸. Union presence in workplaces may be ensured by representatives elected in the company such as team leaders, health and safety officers and piece rate negotiators. They “are visiting construction places every day.” The purpose of these visits has not to do, in principle, with precarious employment but according to a participant, time should be taken “to ask a couple of questions” to enquiry about the employment situation of workers.

When there are no elected representatives in the companies, there may be visits from the local union. A participant involved in organising construction workers from Eastern Europe explains that this implied for him, as a translator and officer from the local union, to go on construction sites several times a week. He had, then, daily contacts with workers in workplaces. Besides, his local union is developing an organising approach. With that purpose, they have recruited a trade union officer with experience from another Swedish union that imported the organising model from a sister union in the United States (US). This model implies, notably, that “the work must be done and managed locally at the companies, not from ombudsmen in a department or federal office.” Thus, this unionist employed by the local union visits very frequently construction sites, “every day I am outside, at the workplaces, speaking out to people.” At the time of the study, he is accomplishing especially a lot of work with workers from Western Asia employed at a big construction site that he regularly meets.

⁸ The Construction Agreement, 1 May 2017–30 April 2020, 11.1.4

A sectoral structure potentially highly inclusive of precarious workers. Byggnads and HRF, like all LO-affiliated unions in Sweden, are constituted on a sectoral and central basis. They have groups in companies and workplaces, as well as local units in counties (“local unions”), but all members are affiliated to the central organisation. This allows for dealing with some of the divisions and discontinuities characterising precarious work, especially when precarious workers are in workplaces and companies difficult to reach for unions such as small firms, and when they experience work disruptions in time due to unemployment. For instance, when workers are in workplaces where there is no local representative, which tends to be the case in small companies, they can call the “centre”, a central “hotline”, to get information and advice. These advisers are highly skilled and qualified, “they can answer any questions regarding the labour law, the collective agreements, health and safety.” If further help is needed, the case is sent to the local union and there, an ombudsman will negotiate. A participant from HRF assumes that often, the first contact that precarious workers make with the union is through the hotline. Unions can also be reached by email and information with contacts is available on the Internet. The involvement of the local union of Byggnads, mentioned by a participant, in visiting workplaces without local representatives shows that beyond a “servicing approach”, an “organising approach” can be developed by local unions as well.

When workers lose their job, they do not need to leave the union because the union is not constituted on the basis of the company but on an industrial basis. Then, they receive from the local union information about the unemployment fund and the job centre. Besides, unemployed workers are still welcome, like other workers, to educations and meetings in the local union. It seems that affiliated workers usually stay in the union when they enter a period of unemployment. A participant considers, however, that more should be done for keeping contact with unemployed workers.

Relations across companies for dealing with subcontracting. Union organisation can be inclusive for overcoming divisions at the same workplace due to subcontracting. In the hotel-restaurant sector, precarious workers who often are found in the subcontracted work of housekeeping and dish-washing have the possibility, nonetheless, of being part of the same union “clubs” as other workers in hotels. These clubs are the groups of affiliated workers in a workplace. For effective inclusion, a campaign “Dignity for housekeepers” has been run in Sweden and other countries in the last 4-5 years⁹ with the purpose of unionising housekeepers and improving their working conditions. Specific meetings in hotels have been organised with them, focusing on work environment issues, such as heavy lifting, salary payments and contracts. Also, the role of the union was explained. This campaign is considered to have been successful for the unionisation of these workers.

⁹ <http://www.iuf.org/w/?q=node/2859>

In construction sites, the contact with workers in subcontractors is mainly ensured by the “Skyddsronder”, who is the union officer for health and safety. Workers from different companies working on the same construction site do not meet but the necessity to do so is acknowledged. The Congress of Byggnads has called for a dialogue between representatives of the different companies. Regarding posted workers, it seems difficult to build relations between the union in the host country and unions in the companies that employ them.

Consideration, listening, adaptation to specific needs. A participant from HRF emphasises the need for considering precarious workers to be “equal” in order to overcome divisions and hierarchies within the work community. Furthermore, the most important according to her for organising precarious workers is to be open vis-à-vis their needs and demands, “not taking for granted that they have a normal situation, and to listen to them, (...), because every person has a different story and different needs.” A participant from Byggnads uses exactly the same words for explaining how it is possible to gain the trust of precarious workers, “Listen to them. (...) So they can trust me.” Also, it is important to adapt to their constraints, for instance by meeting them in atypical places and times. For organising construction workers from Eastern Europe, a participant relates that he took the time to have meetings with them in the weekend, in the evening, where they lived rather than where they were working because they were afraid of contacts visible to the employer. Besides, a participant from HRF explains the importance of taking more time than usually required for exchanges with precarious workers, to explain and listen. A participant from Byggnads points out that precarious migrants may not have the same culture and view of the union, therefore an “organising” approach is needed where “you have much longer time and opportunity to follow up, build up a relationship with those employees. Confidence is gained if you put time and soul into the organization.” He insists on the need for building a relationship, keeping contact, providing constant support so that workers trust the union.

Communication in the language of precarious migrant workers. Translation is done in both unions in order to communicate with those of the precarious who are migrant and not Swedish-speaking. In the hotel-restaurant sector, translating devices such as google translate are commonly used. Also, there is a “very good network” of union officers who have knowledge of languages. They translate texts and help as interpreters, especially in meetings with workers in workplaces. A participant from HRF explains, “we are helping each others as trade union officers and members and with other networks (...) to try to make the information in the languages persons need.” One of the participants is a union officer from an Asian country who regularly helps as an interpreter. For the campaign aimed at unionising housekeepers, the material was translated in eight languages.

In the construction sector, the union has information in several languages, for instance the main brochure that is translated in 12 languages. They also try to recruit trade union officials that are multilingual. One of the participants in the study is from Eastern Europe and had been hired by the union as an interpreter for organising workers from the same country as him. Presently, he is an ombudsman and is still frequently called on by those workers because they know that he can speak their language. Therefore, he can explain to them the role of the union and encourage them to become members to get further help. Besides, the website of his local union has information in this Eastern European language. A participant mentions that there is a need for recruiting more union officers who can speak the languages of precarious migrant construction workers.

Mirroring workers' diversity. Speaking another language is likely to mean, also, having another background and being from the same country or the same community as the workers with whom the language is shared. This matters for gaining trust as well. For instance, in the hotel restaurant sector, the participant who is a migrant woman from an Asian country has a particular background that proved to be very helpful for unionising her colleagues with similar backgrounds and establishing relations with workers in other workplaces who were also women from the same country as her. A participant from HRF who is another migrant unionist explains that being from a different country as a unionist can help to "relate" to migrant workers, to gain their faith and to demonstrate to them that migrants also can learn and get involved. In the construction industry, the union officer from Eastern Europe explains that when workers hear that he is speaking their language, they think, "He is one of us." Therefore, they are more open because "a guy who is from the same country, we can speak more to him." Thus, the language is not only about communication but also about belonging to the same community. About the youth, it can be mentioned that they are organised in Byggnads within a youth committee that visits construction schools to give information about the union to students. This suggests that it might be assumed that the young students will listen more to other young people.

Society and union members as media. Relations happen to be built sometime through the spontaneous mediation of society and union members without any deliberate actions of unions. Thus, the narratives of some participants with a precarious migrant background highlight the role that friends and partners can play for advising them to join the union. Also, co-workers can give this advice when workers are mixed, as this is reported by a participant in the case of workers from a Baltic country who were encouraged to contact the union by Swedish construction workers employed by different companies but in the same workplace. Sometimes, the union is contacted by Swedish workers who give information about the problematic situation of precarious migrant workers with

whom they talked in the workplace. A participant from HRF highlights that the education of members can reach precarious workers who are not members but may have exchange with members, “it is like a passing on thing.” It seems possible to assume that the context of high union density in Sweden is an asset for such a circulation of information. Also, the usefulness of social media is emphasised.

Reaching workers through other organisations. Society is not only made of individuals but also of organisations where precarious workers may be met. Thus, a participant from HRF explains that for meeting workers out of workplaces, they have reached out to different organisations, the Mosques, the churches and the open houses. According to her, “that’s the most efficient”, and this is not done enough because of lack of time and there “are not so many people who can do it”, but there should be more commitment in such a “non-traditional” mode of organising. She mentions also that the union may respond to invitations from leagues, football clubs, youth clubs, communities. Both unions, Byggnads and HRF, work with the Trade unions centre for undocumented workers (FCPC)¹⁰ in Stockholm, which has its own strategy for reaching undocumented workers. In Byggnads, the visits from the union, through the youth committee, to construction schools make it possible to reach future workers. During these visits, the union talks about organisation, history and work life. The access to construction schools is not problematic as teachers are wanting the union to come to speak about how the labour market works in the Swedish construction sector. Such school visits are also done by HRF when they have available representatives to do so.

Adapting the fees. In both unions, unemployed workers have reduced membership fees. A participant from HRF explains that a lot of members who get unemployed ask, then, for the termination of their membership because they cannot afford it. Many of them would decide in the end to stay in the union because they are then informed that their fees are reduced. In both unions, students at secondary schools in professional training have no fees. A participant from Byggnads underlines, thus, that when he was a student “it was very easy to become a member actually.”

3.3.2 Empowering with education and inclusion in leadership positions

Education for involving workers and making them feel secure. Education based on courses is an important part of the unions’ work. Workers who take these courses still have their income from the employer. Through this education, they can get knowledge and awareness of their rights which can then lead them to take action. The narrative of a young construction worker highlights the centrality of education for the commitment in the union. When he was no older

¹⁰ <http://www.fcp.se/>

than 20, his team leader suggested to a union officer from the local union to involve him in the organisation. This union officer asked him “so, what do you want to do?”, and he replied, “Educate me.” Then, they started training.

The access of precarious workers to this education, that is usually in Swedish and for members, is mainly problematised with reference to the language and the access of non-members to these courses. The participant from HRF who is from an Asian country explains that she gives courses in her language in her union for members and in the LO confederation for non-members, the latter being an introduction to unions in Sweden. Another foreign-born participant from HRF gives the same introductory courses in another foreign language for the confederation. These courses are very successful and create a network with the help of social media and by encouraging the workers who attend classes to spread the information. Participants report that some precarious workers have unionised after they had this education. Especially, migrant workers in restaurants without collective agreement have unionised in great numbers following these classes and “now they are actually shouting at the boss that they want a collective agreement.” A participant explains that this education in their language made it possible to include them and, also, the union “let them organise themselves.” Thus, education is associated with the possibility of self-organisation and empowerment for taking action. According to the participant from an Asian country, the most important thing for precarious workers to join the union is that they learn about their rights and “understand that the union can help them” so that they can feel secure.

A step further in union education is the training for leadership positions of trade union officers. Some participants in both unions underline that it is problematic that such education is only in Swedish. A participant from Byggnads points out that “there are no ready-made training packages and plans for the migrant to have more responsibility and influence in the trade union”. A participant from HRF considers “that’s a barrier to come over.” Some participants from Byggnads report, nonetheless, the training by the local union of workers from Western Asia about health and safety, with the help of external translators, so that these workers can elect one of them as a health and safety union officer.

Inclusion and active involvement in the organisation. Empowering is done through taking responsibility in the union organisation as well. About her own experience, a participant with a precarious migrant background in HRF emphasises that “it really opened a new world” when she became “active” in the union. Indeed, she “has learned a huge amount” and “met a huge number of great people.” Thus, involvement is also a source of learning through the experience that can be then acquired and the multiple interactions with other activists. The access to these leadership positions appears to be mainly determined by the process of democratic election. A participant from HRF mentions that the election of precarious workers may be controversial because

the difficulties related to their employment situation may be perceived as likely to hinder their commitment in the union. Unions should trust in the ability of precarious workers to take responsibility in spite of their difficulties, “Yes, it is difficult but it is doable (...), we need to elect them because if we ask [them], do you want to organise yourself, I think they would say, yes!”

In Byggnads, the organising model that a local union aims to implement “focuses on recruiting new members and making them active in the trade union.” Thus, the trade union officer who is in charge of the project insists that “it is important to make them understand that it is in their hands to change their workplace together.” Within the union, the youth committee of Byggnads appears to be aimed at empowering young construction workers through education, socialisation and representation. Indeed, the youth committee is represented in the central board as well as in the county boards of the union. Women are also organised in the union within a network, where they have education and develop a structure to make their own decisions. Unlike the youth committee, this network is not represented in the boards of the union.

3.3.3 Making precarious workers safer in the context of their unionisation

The centrality of safety for the unionisation of precarious workers. When precarious workers ask for the help of unions, their demands relate mainly to contract termination and absence of payment (such as no salary, no salary increase, no holiday pay), according to a participant from Byggnads. There are “of course plenty of other problems as well,” but those other problems are less important to workers. Cases of non-payment of wages and illegal terminations of contract are also found in the hotel-restaurant sector and represent an important part of negotiations with small companies. Besides, insecure employment status can be the very object of demands of workers, which a participant from HRF underlines, “often temporary workers would like to have a long term agreement.” Conversely, when precarious workers do not want to join the union, precarious employment is an explicit reason for that, “they do not want to start any trouble at the workplace, *When I get the fixed contract, I will become a member and I also will demand the right salary and the right working hours and so one.*” Thus, the need and demand for safety appears to be central for the unionisation of precarious workers.

Also, a participant from HRF with a precarious migrant background mentions that she joined the union because this gives “a feeling of safety, security, to know that you are part of an organisation that will help you.” Thus, safety is also associated with the belonging to a helpful and supportive group regardless of any disputes with the employer. Expectation of help suggests insurance logic but “being part” seems to mean more than that and might relate to inclusion and affiliation. On this point, this is notable that the brochure of Byggnads that is translated in several languages has the main message on the cover page,

“Don’t stand alone. Sign up today!”¹¹ Safety is at first associated with inclusion in a group (not being alone) before insurance schemes.

Negotiations. Negotiation is at the core of unions activity for defending workers interests in general and for the protection of precarious workers more particularly. Collective bargaining produces institutional resources through collective agreements that set boundaries to precarious work and that can be mobilised for the negotiations of individual cases of precarious workers – unless the lack of collective agreement in the faulted company allows only to refer to labour legislation. Negotiations on individual disputes are strongly interlinked with the unionisation of precarious workers by responding to precarious workers’ demands for safety. Individual negotiations are conducted by local representatives in companies or by ombudsmen in local unions when there is no local representation. In case of disagreement and where there is no collective agreement, the lawyers of the union can make a lawsuit before the district court (Tingsrätten). Where there is a collective agreement, unsuccessful local negotiations are followed by negotiations at the central level.¹² If no agreement can still be found, the case is then brought before the Labour Court (Arbetsdomstolens). However, the Labour Court is “the last resort” and most disputes are generally solved through negotiation at local level.

A participant from HRF indicates that it is common for the union to negotiate the transformation of part-time and fixed-term contracts into safer employment. Often, the union is at first contacted by workers who want information and to know “what is right, and what is wrong”. Then, the union examines the situation and “often see[s] that employers use the wrong way to employ people.” Therefore, the union can engage in negotiation to obtain another type of employment. Given the high risk of retaliation against workers who have an “employment for individual days” and whose contract can be terminated immediately by the employer, a collective approach may be then better to avoid the exposure of individuals, which is reported in a company where the union has been checking every month the number of fixed-term contracts for several years. The access to such information is a right granted by the law when there is a collective agreement¹³. In this case, the transformation of fixed-term contracts into long-term contracts has been negotiated on the collective basis of the misuse of the collective agreement by the company. Concerned workers were informed of the action and many of them unionised as a result.

In the construction industry, negotiation concerning salaries payments and contract termination is the daily activity of one of the participants, who works as ombudsman mostly in charge of small construction sites and has been organising especially workers from Eastern Europe. Difficulties characterising individual negotiation for precarious workers are addressed by some provisions

11 <https://www.bygggnads.se/siteassets/broschyror/oversatta-broschyror/bygggnads-medlemsbroschyr-engelska.pdf>

12 Employment (Co-Determination in the Workplace) Act (1976:580), Section 10, 14

13 Employment (Co-Determination in the Workplace) Act (1976:580), Section 19

of the collective agreement that engage head contractors' responsibility for non-payments of salaries by subcontractors.¹⁴ Also, labour legislation provides that the state takes responsibility for the wages for a limited amount and a limited period of time¹⁵ in case of bankruptcy. In this regard, some interventions of the union might lead to the bankruptcy of companies when they are not able to comply with workers' rights. A participant considers it to be "a cleaning job" for the union to make such companies disappear.

Moreover, a participant from Byggnads indicates that there may be individual negotiation for the validation of the experience of construction workers who have not been educated at the construction schools.¹⁶ This mainly concerns migrant workers and young uneducated workers. A participant from HRF reports negotiations that could obtain that migrant workers were allowed to take part to Swedish courses during working hours in a few companies.

However, an important difficulty for negotiations may be the absence of collective agreement coverage. Then, the object of negotiation with the company may be the signature of the collective agreement and industrial action may be conducted in case of disagreement.

Industrial action. The important role of strikes is underlined by a participant from Byggnads, "without strike, without sympathy strikes, there is no Swedish model." At first, the (threat of) strike reinforces the bargaining power of unions in the negotiation of collective agreements. Sympathy strikes may be conducted in solidarity with another sector.¹⁷ These strikes can only be organised during the negotiations of the central collective agreement or when companies that lack collective agreement refuse to sign it (which happened in the well-known Laval case). Once the collective agreement is signed, there is normally¹⁸ a duty of peace for its duration until the next negotiation, with the exception of blockages for non-payment of salaries that are "clearly due"¹⁹. This is called "löneblockad", "we close that construction site, and also the other companies until that company pays you." A participant indicates, however, that such blockages of construction sites are more rare nowadays, and unions tend to work with a more legal approach. This may be problematic for dealing with difficulties that are typically the ones of precarious workers, such as non-payment of salaries and absence of coverage by the collective agreement.

14 The Construction Agreement, 1 May 2017–30 April 2020, APPENDIX D, 6. Contractors chains and main contractor responsibility. This agreement was reached in 2014

<http://www.nordiclabourjournal.org/nyheter/news-2014/article.2014-04-03.7512542809>

15 <https://lagen.nu/begrepp/L%C3%B6negaranti>

16 The validation of experience is regulated by the Construction Industry Professionals Board (BYN) to which Byggnads is part as well as other employees and employers organisation <http://www.byn.se/validering> BYN's operations are governed by the parties' vocational training agreements <http://www.byn.se/om-byn>.

17 In 2016, the unions Seko, Byggnads, Elektrikerna, Fastighets and Musikerförbundet strike in sympathy with the painters union <https://www.svd.se/lo-forbereder-sympativarsel>

18 Wildcat strikes happen to be organised sometimes

<https://www.thelocal.se/20170712/stockholm-waste-collectors-resign-as-strike-hits-one-week-mark>

19 Employment (Co-Determination in the Workplace) Act (1976:580), Section 41

Media and public opinion. A participant from HRF indicates that this is mainly the central organisation that works with the media. According to some participants from Byggnads, there may be some work “sometimes” with the media to put pressure on employers in local cases related to precarious workers, which can be useful for embarrassing the major companies and head contractors. However, there is “not so much” work with the media presently. The union did that much more a few years ago. However, unions may be their own media for mobilising public opinion which can be observed in the campaign for housekeepers. The material for this campaign included notably a brochure targeting the public entitled “Did you know” from the Nordic Union for Workers in the Hotel, Restaurant, Catering and Tourism Sector. The campaign was also conducted through social media with the hash-tags #schystastädvillkor and #fairhousekeeping.²⁰

Making the conditions surrounding work safer? Precarious workers may have many demands not only related to work but also to surrounding conditions likely to make their general situation unsafe, complicated, stressful, uncertain, such as unemployment, housing, taxation, work permit, health, etc. A participant from Byggnads relates, “all the time, there were questions about taxes, social security contributions, child support, what should happen when I get sick, etc.” Participants from HRF indicate, “they ask absolutely different questions about how the society generally works, how to get an apartment, and taxation and so on”, and “often people come from other countries of Europe, they call and ask, *Could you help me to find a new job?*” In the context of the current economic crisis due to corona-virus, “the question is common right now, it is, *how are you trade union trying to help me in the situation because I am going to be sent home to Bangladesh maybe.*”

Some of these issues may not be considered to be related to the labour market nor in union’s remit. Still, a participant mentions that they are trying to help a migrant union officer threatened with deportation. Regarding the help requested by some precarious workers for finding work, a participant from HRF indicates “that’s not what we are bound to do, we have never done it. Maybe this is something we should look at in the future.” In the construction sector, the observation is made that “it is really the job of the job centre.” Nevertheless, there is “cooperation within MB groups²¹ with trade union representatives in companies to find work for the redundant members.” The collective agreement regulates the possibility for companies to “lend construction crews” instead of laying-off workers in the context of market fluctuations²² and MB groups may make interventions in that sense. Besides, meetings in the local union are networks within which unemployed construction workers continue to be embedded and which they can rely on to obtain information about available jobs.

20 https://www.hrf.net/app/uploads/2016/02/St%C3%A4dkampanj2017_engelska.pdf

21 A MB group is a co-determination group of the union in the company

22 The Construction Agreement, 1 May 2017–30 April 2020, Appendix A3, Special Rules for borrowing and loaning out workers between companies

The Congress of Byggnads has discussed the project to collect and publish information about available jobs in the industry for their members.

A participant refers to a time in the construction industry, before 1988, when there was no status basis. Workers signed a contract of employment for each construction site. This participant remembers that when he was, then, a student at the construction school, he was told by his teachers, “ I do affiliate you, I do you a member in our trade union, or you won’t have any job at all.” Indeed, being a member made it possible to go with the elected team leader, the “Lagbas”, who was the most skilled and “would get a new office all the time.” The level of solidarity and protection in the group was “extremely high.”

Solidarity and protection are the purposes of insurances in which Swedish unions are generally involved nowadays. A participant from HRF indicates that insurance may be an important motivation of workers for being in the union. She is responsible in the union for providing information about insurance to members and non-members. Therefore, she gets a lot of questions about insurance and the health system. The administration by unions of unemployment funds (“a-kassan”) is generally considered to be important for the unionisation of workers, even though the two organisations are different. A participant from Byggnads, however, questions the relation between unionisation and unemployment fund. He attributes mainly the negative impact of the reform of unemployment funds in 2007 on union membership to the increase in union fees. Some workers left the union because “it was too much money”, which does not mean that these workers were previously in the union mainly because union membership was more advantageous for being part of the unemployment fund. While mentioning that “there is still a fear in our organisation that if you totally divide between unemployment benefits and the trade union, our membership would decrease,” he insists that workers join the union above all in relation to the meaning of the union’s missions for the overall protection of labour.

However, the protection against unemployment which is traditionally part of the overall protection of labour by unions in Sweden tends to be lacking for precarious workers, especially in the present. The ongoing corona-crisis highlights the outcomes of precarious employment in time of unemployment. A participant from HRF explains that many precarious workers in the hotel-restaurant sector are not currently eligible for the unemployment fund because they have not been working the required number of hours. The interlinking of employment status and insurance benefits echo the multiple dimensions of precariousness straining the protection of labour.

4 CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

4.1 Results discussion

4.1.1 Unions perception and problematisation of precarious employment

Labour flexibility and management control. The definition of precarious work in the words of participants is paradoxical. On the one hand, they agree with the reference to flexible modes of labour exploitation such as fixed-term contracts, temporary work, part-time work in association with the two dimensions of income and job insecurities. Thereby, they confirm the diverse attempts of definition of precarious employment that emphasise, notably, contingency (Quinlan 2012), flexibility (Kalleberg 2013), short-term, instability (Mešić 2017:16), employment insecurity (Kreshpaj et al. 2019). On the other hand, participants highlight, also, the precarious status of migrants working with temporary permits who are “tied” to their employer and “can’t leave.” Such bonds contrast singularly with the contingency of young precarious workers with “employment for individual days” who will prefer to “go to the next hotel” rather than making a case. However, Ikeler (2019) underlines that the propensity of precarious workers to leave on their own initiative because of poor working conditions is part, as well as “contingent control” through unstable and discretionary work provision, of an overall model where work instability serves flexible practices and furthermore makes workers less likely to organise. Thus, the apparent fluidity of young precarious workers feeling free to quit their job (but unable to leave the business) could be analysed as a form of control of labour, not so far from the control of migrants with temporary permits tied to their employers. Indeed, precarious in their case means, for a participant, that “they cannot oppose anything.”

The high degree of control of precarious workers is highlighted by the dominant theme of fear and code of silence. Precarious workers are silent in the sense that they cannot complain and therefore have to accept worsened working conditions that other workers would reject. Besides, there is often a high degree of supervision meaning a lack of autonomy of workers who have to comply fully with management directives. As a result, labour is highly flexible whether this concerns the function of the worker or the work provision determined by scheduling (part-time) and/or the duration of the contract (short-term). Standing (2016:37) uses the concept of “labour flexibility” encompassing dimensions that are functional and related to wages, beside the numerical dimension corresponding to casual and temporary work. Given the pursuit by capital of maximal profit and surplus-value extraction (Marx 1887:336), wage flexibility (Standing 2016:48) leads to income inadequacy (Kreshpaj et al. 2019). Participants highlight that salaries may not be paid at all. On the whole, the loss

of control by workers over their work life might generally capture the essential meaning of precarious employment that could potentially affect all workers to different degrees rather than being a particular category of workers defined by certain work arrangements (Quinlan et al. 2016:28).

Lack of rights and protection. The study suggests that the fear and silence of precarious workers stem from lack of safety in the condition surrounding works that makes workers highly dependent on the willingness of the employer to provide work and income, which makes higher their perception of the risk of management retaliation. This may concern, for instance, the lack of access to unemployment benefits, low income likely to mean low savings, family duties worsening the consequences of income loss especially for single mothers, the right to stay and live in the country for migrants. Lack of rights is another dimension identified by Kreshpaj et al. (2019) that echoes the Polanyian notion of lack of protection. Polanyi (1957) emphasises that employment is a necessary condition for earning an income which makes the worker highly vulnerable when being fully dependent on a self-regulated labour market. About migrant workers, Standing (2016) defines them as denizens with very few if not any rights. Regarding women, not only is their social “mothering role” likely to constrain work arrangements and to translate into part-time notably (Grimshaw et al. 2017), it seems also to be an additional pressure for securing income at the price of high concessions in terms of work conditions and arrangements. Indeed, mothers need this income *also* for their children. On the whole, in view of the imperative need of precarious workers for income and therefore for work, the meaning of “precarious” might be fully understood through etymology as what is begged for and obtained by entreaty.

Some participants estimate that employment is more likely to be precarious when workers do not know about unions or when they have no unions, which tends to be especially the case in small workplaces. “Lack of unions” is another aspect of the lack of rights such as defined by Kreshpaj et al. (2019). Indeed, protection may come from both law and unions (Polanyi 1957:81). Standing (2016:11) equates the “labour-related securities” which the precariat lacks with the “industrial citizenship” obtained by the working class in the aftermath of the Second World War. The lack of securities, protection by unions and/or law, rights and citizenship of precarious workers might echo, to some extent, the discussed status of the individual in international law, who is not traditionally considered a “subject” owing rights but an “object” ruled by states (Salako 2019). The “object” in law is not far from the Polanyian “commodity” which will not surprisingly be “silent.”

De-skilling and deprecation of the skills of precarious workers. Participants often indicate that precarious work is unskilled – even though some precarious workers may be overqualified. As a result, precarious workers are highly replaceable and their bargaining power is reduced. Thus, their situation is

characterised by “skill reproduction insecurity” (Standing 2016:8). Also, workers do not have the opportunity to learn and gain autonomy through their work. Given the centrality of work for subjectivity and human life, professional skills are essential for personal growth (Desjours 2006:50). Similarly, Polanyi (1957:45) points out that work is not mainly motivated by gain but, beyond what is necessary, by the making of relations and personal self-fulfilment, “reciprocity, competition, joy of work, and social approbation.” Standing (2016:26) associates professionalism and “mutual respect” within the profession. Thus, there is a tension between the market law and the fundamental social need for learning and gaining skills that has to do with the construction of self and relations with others, which is denied to precarious workers who are restricted to “unskilled labour” and lack the time and autonomy to build experience and savoir-faire.

Nonetheless, by asking “what do you mean by skills?”, a participant points out that the concept is “socially constructed” (Grimshaw et al. 2017:8) and cannot be obviously defined. A traditional view of skills is based on the one hand on advanced education and, on the other hand, on “hard technical abilities” that have to do both with “physical dexterity” and technical knowledge, “know-how.” However, a shift can be observed in a context of polarisation between on one hand, a demand for high analytical and conceptual skills in “lead-edge sectors” and, on the other hand, requirements for “soft skills” in low cost-based neo-Fordist organisations in mass services sectors and some parts of manufacturing. “Soft” skills are mainly behavioural and relate to relational attitudes that should be friendly with the customer (especially, smiling) and compliant with management (Payne 2000). As for Grimshaw et al. (2017:8), they point out that women skills for work traditionally accomplished at home are depreciated and that skills should not only be defined as technical because this neglects the contribution of social capital and “tacit skills.” Thus, the concept of skill seems to be at the intersection of capital-labour struggle and segmentation processes. For participants, skills are not defined by relational aptitude to comply with management directive but rather by autonomy and knowledge. In such a view, neo-fordist organisational evolutions equating with increased supervision could be interpreted as a movement of deskilling and precarisation. However, the essentially technical approach of skills found in the study lets open the question about whether other dimensions of skills might benefit from lower social recognition especially when associated with (women) precarious employment.

Fragmentation and commodification of organisations. Participants associate precarious employment with the fragmentation of organisations by subcontracting. Outsourcing and subcontracting have been parts of important changes in global economy since the late 1970s alongside, notably, recurring restructuring and downsizing of large businesses, and they are associated with an increase in precarious employment (Quinlan 2015:1). On the whole, subcontracting often is associated with worsened work conditions because of

cost-pressures, disorganisation and regulatory failure (Quinlan et al. 2016:28). Subcontracting relies on a payment-by-result basis which puts pressure on the subcontractor for achieving the work quickly and at least cost in a context of “intense competition” (Mayhew et al. 1997:165).

Such a fragmentation of organisations would translate a process of commodification of firms, according to Standing (2016:35) who highlights that firms are “social institutions” and refers to the Nobel prize winner Ronald Coase according to whom long-term relationships within firms could build trust and reduce transaction costs. However, the intensification of the trade of firms through mergers and acquisitions have made investments more opportunistic. The commodification of firms also results in outsourcing and offshoring which disturbs career paths and investments in skills because of uncertainty about the durability of positions within organisations that are constantly exposed to the risk of outsourcing (Standing 2016:36).

The process of commodification of firms highlighted by Standing (2016:36) echoes the financialisation of the economy described by Belfrage & Kallifatides (2018) in the case of Sweden. There, a transition from an export-led model to a debt-led model can be observed in the aftermath of the deregulation of credit and capital control and monetary, fiscal, pensions and public service reforms in the 1980s and 1990s. The evolution of profits and productivity has slowed down in the export sector whereas the expansion of the financial sector accounts for more of the economic growth. In this context, the growing influence of financial and short-termist capital is associated with the promotion of the labour market flexibility agenda (Belfrage & Kallifatides 2018). From a “varieties of capitalism” approach, the previous expansion of the Swedish welfare regime might have been supported by employers in relation to the need of companies for institutional frameworks promoting investment in skills by securing employees (Fleckenstein & Christine Lee 2017). However, such assumed cross-class compromises would be shattered in the current context of financialisation. This process of financialisation of the Swedish economy might account also for the dismantling of the social institutions that firms used to be to promote short-term plus value based on downward pressure on standards through competition.

Participants describe this dismantling between on the one hand, head-contractors or clients, and on the other hand, subcontractors, staffing companies and self-employers. They highlight that subcontracting is mainly a process driven by head-contractors. Especially, one of the participants, about workers from Eastern Europe, describes self-employment as “dependent employment” disguising employment relationship. The commodification of firms, in those cases, might be as fictitious as it is for labour. Subcontractors would be, often, smaller firms (Quinlan 2015:11). However, the study does not show if the small companies where employment is perceived as more precarious by some participants are subcontractors under dependence and/or operating on their own in the market. Thus, the question is left open about whether the perceived

situation of precarious employment in small firms relates (mainly) to a process of fragmentation driven by bigger organisations.

4.1.2 Difficulties for the unionisation of precarious workers

Labour fragmentation: detachment, segmentation, inequalities regimes. According to participants, precarious workers may unionise less because of lack of interactions with the work community when they have part-time and/or short-term contract, temporary work or posted work. This confirms, for these precarious workers with weaker connections with the workplace, the theory that they have lower attachment to the labour force and therefore are more difficult to reach and retain as members by unions (Schnabel 2013:260). Indeed, regular relationships are fundamental for fostering “organic solidarity” (Durkheim 1933:365) and the “interactionist approach” of unionisation highlights the influence of the social context and working environment on building a “group culture” (Schnabel & Wagner 2007:10). Also, the lack of stable relations may weaken social custom. The social custom theory explains that workers unionise even if they do not need to do so to benefit from the public goods provided by unions because of the sanction of the reputational effect that solves the problem of free-riding. This effect needs initially the involvement of important resources and then is accelerating around 45-65% workplace union density. However, “heterogeneous effects” are associated with career instability or turn over. Workers who are in those situations are less exposed to the effect of social custom (Ibsen et al. 2017:507). One of the participants mentions that some temporary workers are not interested in unionising because they would not benefit from union services given their very short stay in the workplace. Beside services, the extent to which contingent workers benefit or perceive that they benefit from unions public goods could be questioned and might weaken, also, the social custom. The difficulties to reach those “detached” precarious workers may, also, impact on the efforts involved by unions. Schnabel (2013:260) suggests indeed that unions would prefer to concentrate on full-time workers which might explain why one of the participants who was previously part-timer was never asked to join the union until she had a full-time employment. A participant also mentions that internal resistance in unions is opposed to efforts aimed at promoting the engagement of atypical workers because of the perception that those workers would experience too important difficulties through their engagement.

The theory of labour detachment is mainly applied to workers who have less connection with the workplaces due to part-time and fixed-term contracts. However, divisions and separation in the words of participants also relate to employment in different workplaces and companies, language barrier and mental representations. The notion of fragmentation (Standing 2016:8, Simms 2017:13, Alberti 2016:73, Refslund 2018:5) could be used to encompass these diverse situations. Regarding subcontracting, Mayhew et al. (1997:168)

underlines that these business practices result in isolating workers which hinders the formation of a collective bargaining power. The isolation of subcontractor workers could be apprehended as a form of detachment from the main work community. Besides, Refslund (2018:14) emphasises that the concentration of precarious migrants in some construction companies give them little opportunity to have contacts with native workers which neutralises the effect of social custom for unionisation. The study also shows that migrants tend to be found mainly in small subcontractor firms in the construction industry and are over-represented in the outsourced housekeeping work in the hotel-restaurant sector. Moreover, there is over-representation of women in this work as well as in the cleaning work in construction sites. The overlapping of labour market segmentation and labour process fragmentation may reinforce the isolation of precarious workers.

The lack of interactions might carry weight on representation, which is suggested by the participants pointing out the wrong perception of unions by precarious workers because they do not know them. Also, inequality regimes may be found in unions where social hierarchies may be replicated (Acker 2006 in Kainer 2015). Some participants observe the negative perception of precarious workers as labour with lower status by other workers, which might impact on the relation between the former and the union, where the latter may be involved. Such divisions are likely to be favoured by the social construction of the “others” by employers through segmentation practices described as a “divide and rule tactic” (Grimshaw et al. 2017).

Status frustration, occupational identity and class consciousness. A participant reports that young workers in the hotel-restaurant sector who work in the sector during or after their studies are “waiting to be something else.” They do not join the union because they have “other dreams” and want to leave the business. Drawing on Mann (1973), Ikeler (2019:510) considers job identity, meaning the identification with one’s work, to be one of the dimensions of class consciousness along with solidarity, opposition to management and support for unions. The relations between precariousness, job identity and unionisation are complex and Pupo & Noack (2014:348) find in the case of precarious local messengers that they have strong occupational identity translating into a culture of independence, competition and divisiveness, which is an essential barrier to unionisation. Thus, the effect of job identity might also depend on the ability of collective actors to influence its meaning. Still, the lack of job identity would impact negatively on unionisation. Ikeler (2019:501) finds in his study of retail workers that those who are more precarious are less skilled, lack more job identity and are, indeed, less unionised.

According to Standing (2016:26), the functional flexibility of the precariat makes it impossible for them to specialise and to build genuine experience and competence. Besides, precarious workers lack “peer-group interactions” needed for the appropriation of professional standards because their ephemeral

positions are always likely to be changed or terminated at the employer's discretion. However, vocational education can be a "strong identity driver" for joining unions (Ibsen et al. 2017:507). Thus, the lack of initial vocational education and long-term relationships allowing for learning with peers would together result in lack of occupational identity unfavourable to unionisation. Nonetheless, lack of vocational skills does not mean lack of skills and lack of job identity may result, as well, from status discord. Standing (2016:11) refers to this concept about precarious workers who are highly educated and have to accept jobs that do not correspond with their qualification, which causes "status frustration." The study does not show whether young workers in the hotel-restaurant sectors lack occupational skills and/or are over-qualified, nevertheless the frustration they feel and their lack of identification with their work clearly is analysed by the participant as an impediment to unionisation. However, this effect is mentioned by only one participant in the case of one specific social group, which limits the apprehension of the effect of the lack of occupational identity on unionisation and possible mediations.

Constrained calculations, fears, rational and emotional paths. The study shows that precarious workers may estimate that the cost of unionisation will be too high, due to the risk of management retaliation particularly important in their situation given the high level of management discretion and/or their lack of rights in the conditions surrounding work. The cost of membership is also mentioned. The concept of cost-benefit calculations can be found in the rational choice theory (RCT), according to which individuals make intentional choices between several possible alternatives with the purpose of maximising benefits and minimising costs in accordance with their preference hierarchy, in other words, what they value best. An assumption is that individuals have enough information to make choices purposely which is an important constraint on the theory as actually information may be variably available (Zey 1997:3). Participants generally emphasise that precarious workers lack information and knowledge about their rights. Besides, the existence of several alternatives may be questioned when some choices are constrained, for instance, by limited financial resources making the cost of membership a barrier. Also, behaviours are not necessarily rational. In a study of an unsuccessful organising campaign in an electronic factory, Devinatz (2005:146) refers to the Wheeler and McClendon (1991) theory of employee support for unionisation that distinguishes between three "paths" whereby workers come to form unions. The first path is rational and involves the cost-benefit calculations. The second path is emotional and may lead to unionisation following the experience of "a specific threat or a particular frustration" originating from the behaviour of the employer that has an effect on work conditions. Unionisation may then be facilitated by conditions such as solidarity or on the contrary inhibited by, for instance, fear of management retaliation through disciplinary sanctions and/or contract termination. At last, the third path is political/ideological and relates to

the ideological opinions of employees vis-à-vis unions. Devinatz (2005:158) finds in his study that the mobilisation of production workers was mainly hindered by the fear of job loss and, therefore, concludes to the primary importance of the emotional path in this case. The same conclusion is likely to be reached by the present study given the pre-eminence of the theme of fear and code of silence. This theme is also largely present in several qualitative studies when examining the relation that precarious workers have with unions and/or with the prospect of challenging management authority with the purpose of improving work conditions (Alberti 2016:87, Pupo & Noack 2014:344, Cunningham et al. 2017:383, Berthonneau 2017:41).

A participant with a precarious migrant background explains that the most important for making workers feel secure is that they know their rights and the possibility to get help from the union. Also, she indicates that she has joined the union precisely for feeling safer. Thus, the search for safety paradoxically may motivate unionisation whereas fear, in other words feeling a lack of safety, generally hinders unionisation. Aquino Moreschi (2015:44) finds in a study of the impact of the experience of “illegality” on the subjectivities of undocumented migrants that fear is the “dominating emotion” especially for those who are isolated and have no solidarity network to support them. Migrants use three different strategies to manage fear: the first one is confinement to avoid authorities which leaves them isolated and vulnerable, the second one consists of gaining knowledge about their rights and information for managing risks with the help of migration networks, the third one is a process of becoming aware of the function of fear to discipline them. Such findings echo very similarly the words of the participants in the present study about the importance of knowledge and social support for overcoming fear. This suggests that fear would be mainly rooted in a lack of knowledge and the perception that no social support can be provided. Besides, a participant indicates that lack of trust of precarious workers in the union may be the main difficulty for organising them. Therefore, the perception of the social support likely to be provided as trustworthy is also of primary importance. The centrality of trust for unionising migrants is also emphasised by Refslund (2018). Given the importance of inclusion in groups and networks for gaining access to information and support and building trust, labour fragmentation might feed the fear of precarious workers by isolating them which in turn is likely to reinforce their isolation, unless conditions allow for taking other paths.

4.1.3 Practices for unionising precarious workers and thereby making employment safer

Care and emotional work. In order to build a relationship with precarious workers, several participants from both unions insist on the importance of gaining their trust through listening, consideration, constant support and personal involvement of “time and soul”. Drawing on Hochschild (2003),

Berthonneau (2017:148) highlights, through an ethnographic study conducted in France, the emotional dimension of local unions “care work” with precarious workers. Indeed, those workers who are afraid do not need only to be assisted in solving their difficulties. They need also to be listened to, reassured and morally supported. Further, the union is a talking space where they can express themselves and break isolation. The empathy, compassion and affective closeness of unionists help those workers to feel confident. One of the French unionists explains “they trust you (...) if they know, when they have a problem (...) that you will *listen* to them” (underlined by the participant, my own translation) (Berthonneau 2017:152), which echoes exactly the words of the Swedish unionists emphasising in the present study the importance of listening. Such “caring” attitude appears to respond to the psychological vulnerability of precarious workers so that they can feel supported and confident.

Negotiation and institutional resources. Solving the difficulties that precarious workers have to face appears, in the study, to be done mostly through the negotiation of individual cases. These negotiations rely on institutional resources provided by the legislation and, when applicable, by the central collective agreements whose role for regulating the labour market is central in Sweden. According to Baccaro et al. (2003:121), institutional frames that are more inclusive of unions lead them, indeed, to mainly rest on “social partnership” through negotiation or institutional involvement targeting the political power. Also, the study shows the importance of the central bargaining level, which is considered advantageous for ensuring the coverage and protection of contingent workers (Heery and Abbott 2000:168). Nonetheless, institutional resources-based strategies do not address directly the issue of the unionisation of precarious workers and some participants mention the limitations of individual negotiation for precarious workers.

Organising model and social movement unionism. Beside the institutional process of negotiation, the study shows the centrality, for several participants, of “organising” in workplaces in opposition to the work from union offices. Local presence at the workplace makes it possible to have direct contact with precarious workers, to build trust, to organise them and to have knowledge about their situation. Thus, local presence enables the union to conduct relevant negotiations for making employment safer, from a “service” perspective, but also to expand membership. In a local union of Byggnads, a reference is explicitly made to the organising model imported from a “sister union” in the US. This model implies that most union officials are in charge of organising duties, which means externally reaching new workplaces and internally empowering workers by raising their awareness and knowledge of their rights, organising workers in committees where they have responsibilities and involving “natural leaders” in leadership positions (Bergene et al. 2014). In the study, the mobilisation of hotel housekeepers is reported to be conducted through

meetings in the workplace which makes it possible to spread in their language knowledge about rights and to encourage their self-organisation. Thus, membership is expanded within workplaces across companies borders. The participant who is one of these housekeepers was given multiple responsibilities and has been leading her fellows and members of her community to unionise. Some of the construction workers from Eastern Europe have been organised through persistent visits at the non-unionised construction sites. Some workers from Western Asia are empowered by union training with translation so that they can elect their own safety representative.

Internal organising may be equated with the construction of a social movement at the workplace, which requires to foster a high level of solidarity and legitimacy to underpin industrial action such as strike and picketing (Bergene et al. 2014:126). Solidarity is formed through the experience of conflict and common opposition to a dominant order (Fantasia 1988:18 in Simms & Deans 2015:175). In the study, such a conflictual approach does not emerge as characterising unions interventions in relation to precarious workers even though the role of industrial action is highlighted notably in the context of central bargaining. However, a participant considers it to be an issue for his union to foster solidarity among precarious workers so that they can strike and defend together their rights especially in workplaces without collective agreement coverage and where negotiation alone might not be efficient.

Beyond “workplace unionism.” Several participants describe organisational practices beyond the workplace and across company borders, for instance through the campaign for subcontractor housekeepers. Establishing relations between subcontractor workers is acknowledged to be an issue by a participant in the construction industry. The limitations of “workplace unionism” are emphasised by Alberti (2016:75) in the context of subcontracting because of the separation of workers in different units. Moreover, subcontractors cannot raise claims directly to their “real employer” in a context of labour process fragmentation. For overcoming such difficulties, Alberti (2016:75) refers to campaigns at the corporate level and that associate allies within the community beside organising workers in the workplace. Moreover, the support of civil society may be sought for instance through ethical consumerism (Bergene et al. 2014:130). The campaign for housekeeper mentioned by participants included such appeal to the public through communication targeting specifically clients.

The limitations of workplace unionism relate, also, to workplaces without local union presence, especially small workplaces, and periods of unemployment during which workers have no connection to a particular workplace. The study shows that the investigated unions have industrial and central structures that are inclusive of workers irrespective of company and whether they are employed or not. Thus, local unions constitute networks of members (not only representatives) independent from the workplace. The limited scope of the study only allows for questioning the degree of mobilisation of these workers networks

in local unions for fully including those who are precarious and for which the relation with the workplace is typically problematic, whether they have contingent relation with the workplace, have no unions in their workplace or are unemployed.

Moreover, participants mention that schools and community based organisations are visited to give information about unions and courses are organised for non-members in the languages of migrant workers. Social media are intensively used for spreading the information about these courses with the purpose especially of reaching workers who have no unions in their workplace – notably in small workplaces. As a result, networks are created especially in migrant communities. Indeed, migrant communities can provide strategic advantage due, notably, to their social networks. Thus, the organisation of migrants was a key dimension of the well-known SEIU’s Justice for Janitors campaign in the United States in the 1990s (Milkman 2006 in Voss 2008). In this campaign, community-based media and community organisations proved to be important vehicles for the unionisation of migrant workers (Kyoung-Hee 2014). Community-based unionism can also offset the loss of job identity by precarious workers against the belonging to the community in combination with a strategy aimed at renewing their occupational identity, for instance through their training on work-related issues (Ikeler 2019:512), which, however, does not emerge in the study.

Beyond the workplace, there are also issues that are usually not considered to be related to the labour market but for which unions may provide help, which is defined as “social unionism” and is associated with the organising model (Refslund 2018:11-15). In the study, the involvement of unions with precarious workers seems, however, mainly focused on work issues. Yet, Swedish unions have a comprehensive remit including issues that are not only directly related to the workplace. Notably, they are traditionally in charge of unemployment funds which would be a “key factor” for the recruitment of precarious workers, that was however weakened by a governmental reform raising membership fees in 2007 (Bruhn et al. 2013:132). In general, the definition of the remit of unions could be questioned in relation to the insecurities experienced in the conditions surrounding work that weaken workers positions in the labour market. The study shows that precarious work jeopardises the traditional protection of unemployed workers and that surrounding insecurities are not exclusively related to lack of unemployment benefits.

The interplay of structure and agency. In their comparison of organising practices in the hotel sector in Toronto, Dublin and Oslo, Bergene et al. (2014:133) estimate that the prevalence of the consensus-based model of industrial relations in Norway limits there the implementation of the organising model and confrontational practices. In the study, some participants consider that not enough resources are involved in organising. Material from the investigated local union of Byggnads, which might be more involved in the

organising model than other parts of the organisation, mentions the relative difficulty for introducing the organising model in countries with strong union tradition. However, precarious employment appears to challenge the models of recruitment and intervention associated with highly institutionalised industrial relations that would be social custom and negotiation. This difficulty is acknowledged by several participants. The study shows, in that context, that the internal agency of at least some unionists, especially those who have a precarious background, is responsive to labour market changes and translates into practices leaning towards organising and community building models.

Gasparri et al. (2019:347-356) emphasise that unions have a dual nature as both institutions and movements and point out the internal dynamics in unions that can play a role in shaping strategies that are not only determined by institutional frames. Besides, institutional resources can be a strong asset for the implementation of organising strategies targeting precarious workers. Indeed, these resources make it possible to engage in time-consuming organising efforts - especially for building trust - and confer a better position for negotiating with employers (Refslund 2018:4). The study underlines, also, that society and unions members might play spontaneously an important role for encouraging precarious workers to join unions, which might explain why Gorodzeisky & Richards (2013:246) find that in Western Europe, the differential between the unionisation rates of migrants and native is lower in the countries where general union density is higher. Thus, general union density and the social recognition of unions role appears to be institutional resources helpful for the unionisation of precarious workers. Furthermore, the union agency may produce favourable institutional frames (Gasparri et al. 2019:347-356), for lack of which organising efforts may not impact significantly on general union density (Heery and Abbott 2000:166). Participants in the study mention the role of industrial action in Sweden, notably through (sympathy) strikes, for strengthening the bargaining power of unions in the negotiation of collective agreement and ensuring favourable labour institutions - whose importance is acknowledged by participants for workers organisation and protection.

Thus, the interplay of agency and structure within industrial relations and the labour market would be interlinked. Drawing on an "interest-based institutionalism" approach, Simms (2017:63) finds that unions can exert agency and impact on job quality through the extension of a representative institution - collective bargaining - to precarious workers. Even though the impact of union interventions may be difficult to generally apprehend, several participants report that, at least in some cases, their unions can transform employment relations and make employment safer. The extension of collective bargaining in hotels to the subcontractor housekeepers' interests has been concomitant to their mobilisation for the improvement of their work conditions.

Another outcome of union agency might relate to small workplaces and companies where precarious work would be more likely to be found according to several participants. One of them, from Byggnads, mentions a "cleaning job"

resulting in the bankruptcy of small companies when the union, informed of violations of workers' rights, asks them to comply with the collective agreement and/or the labour legislation. There might be strategies of companies to go bankrupt in order to avoid responding to these claims. However, such interventions of unions might impact on the structure of the labour market regarding establishment size, which was observed in the case of the Justice for Janitors campaign (Kyoung-Hee 2014:510) and might thereby have an indirect and negative effect on the level of precariousness in the labour market.

4.2 Method discussion

In qualitative research, validity may be diversely understood, and alternative concepts are proposed such as credibility, authenticity, criticality, integrity. Still, the following definition of validation could be retained, which would be the "attempt to assess the "accuracy" of the findings" (Creswell 2007:206). In this regard, the accurate understanding of issues in the study might have not been fully reached given the limited rather than prolonged engagement in the field and the lack of participant observation. However, long and in-depth interviews hopefully made it possible to build trust with participants and to enable them to share their stories and meanings (Creswell 2007:207,40). Member checking was applied which is considered best for credibility (Creswell 2007:209). Another validation strategy rests on the triangulation of data sources to examine the different aspects of a phenomenon from multiple perspectives and to seek corroboration of evidence (Creswell 2007:208, Baxter & Jack 2008:556). A limitation might have been that the methodological choice was exploratory rather than systematic. The process was iterative and adaptive to the singular experiences of participants and allowed unexpected themes to emerge and to be dealt with in the course of the study rather than systematically. However, the process of going back to participants through further exchanges by email about issues that emerged after their interviews leaned, to some extent, toward systematic triangulation and confirmation of findings.

The multiplicity of perspectives stemmed, at first, from the choice of two unions in different sectors. Thus, differences and similarities between cases could be explored (Baxter & Jack 2008:548), and the results were more likely to be generalisable than in a single case study (Creswell 2007:76). The two cases differed with diverse manifestations of precarious employment and labour market segmentation. Besides, the samples within unions gathered individuals with different experiences and backgrounds. Therefore, the identification of "important common patterns" (Creswell 2007:127) suggested strong results. However, the sampling might be considered also to be an important limitation of the study in relation to the comprehensive scope of the research questions. The selected settings were far from exhausting the multiplicity of the dimensions of precarious employment and their various implications for unions. For instance,

some sectors like home-based care or local messengers differ strongly from the investigated industries. Besides, there was no cross country comparison and the Swedish context, characterised by high levels of union density, is very specific. Therefore, thick descriptions about the contexts of the findings had the purpose of allowing readers to make their own judgement about their transferability (Creswell 2007:209). Another limitation was that the sampling was limited by time rather than by data saturation that was not reached systematically, which limits generalisation (Saunders et al. 2018:1899). Additionally, the examined perspective was of a limited number of union officials whereas the perspective of non-union members and rank-and-files was missing. The inclusion of different perspectives is essential for in-depth and holistic understanding (Baxter & Jack 2008:556, Creswell 2007:39). Practical difficulties for reaching precarious workers out of unions determined this problematic focus on unions organisations. Still, several participants had backgrounds marked by precarious employment and/or belonging to groups socially vulnerable.

Given the lack of consensual definition of precarious work, representations and problematisation of this phenomenon was a necessary part of the study beside unions practices. A methodological limitation might have been the influence that was exerted over participants (Creswell 2007:215) given that a definition of precarious work was proposed to them, even though they were requested to give their own critical point of view on this definition. A phenomenological approach of the perception by unions of precarious work might have been more relevant in combination with the case study approach for unionisation practices. Still, the study could improve the understanding of the meaning of precarious work and the implications of this phenomenon for unions across different sectors, employment situations and social backgrounds.

Systematic content analysis through the coding process was to guarantee a correct data analysis (Baxter & Jack 2008:556) and peer review (Creswell 2007:209) was insured through the process of opposition and examination of the thesis. Reliability, which may be defined as the consistency and stability of findings across different researchers and different projects (Creswell 2009:190), was ensured by checking the absence of any obvious mistake in transcripts. Also, transcripts were sent to participants for their own verification. Such verifications were especially important regarding the language issue as all interviews involved at least one language that was not the native language of participants and/or myself. Besides, in order to avoid errors related to the meanings of codes, some of them were given extensive names and there was a process of going back and forth between the results draft and the meaning units in transcripts. However, there was no cross-checking of codes also named inter-coder agreement (Creswell 2009:191).

Finally, given my background as a labour inspector and unionist in France who used to be involved on precarious work issues, I had previous knowledge, a certain closeness to the field and, also, the perspective of a 'stranger' curious about another social model. I felt this "personal history" was mainly an asset for

apprehending issues, however it might have carried weight on my pre-understanding of the researched questions, which I intended to counterbalance by self-awareness (Graneheim & Lundman 2004:111), a 'double movement' of familiarisation and defamiliarisation (Gottzén 2013:197) and "organised scepticism" (Swedish Research Council 2017:13).

4.3 Conclusions

The aim of the study was to understand the implications of precarious work for unionisation in light of representations, problematisation and experiences within Swedish blue-collar unions in the construction and hotel-restaurant sectors. On the whole, the narratives of participants touch upon global economic and political transformations. In a context of financialisation and welfare dismantlement, precarious work appears to stem from the commodification, flexibilisation and fragmentation of the workforce and organisations. Further, management power is reinforced in accordance with neo-fordist business models and precarious workers experience a loss of control over their working life. The consequences have social and psychological dimensions that affect the occupational identity of these workers whose fear manifests a predominantly emotional path in their staying away from unions. Moreover, the social custom is jeopardised and available institutional resources for individual negotiations can provide useful but limited support. The unions practices described by participants to respond to the particular situation of precarious workers have an emotional dimension based on a care ethos and lean, to some extent, towards organising and community building models that are more typically observed in lower-union density countries. Thereby, union agency appears to engage in an interplay with the structures of industrial relations and the labour market by transforming employment relationships and extending interests representation in labour institutions, even though the extent to which such practices have effect in the entire sectors of construction and hotel-restaurant cannot be apprehended by the study given its limited scope. Social movement and conflictual practices were not reported among participants but it was suggested that fostering solidarity among precarious workers would be necessary to underpin industrial action and to overcome difficulties due to limited institutional resources. Beyond the workplace, unions ensure the protection of unemployed workers with unemployment funds. However, precarious workers tend not to be eligible for these funds. Furthermore, such protection against unemployment does not address all the diverse dimensions of contemporary precariousness that do not seem to be dealt with through social unionism practices.

The results suggest some issues to be more investigated such as the relation between, on the one hand, precarious employment and on the other hand, establishment size and financialisation, the impact of single motherhood on

labour market positions depending on (lack of) protections, the status frustration of young precarious workers, the conditions in which unions are able to make a company sign the central collective agreement when it is lacking. The perspective of unionists would need to be completed by the words of rank-and-files and non-unionised workers, for instance with more focused in-depth case studies allowing for more engagement in the field. The attempt of de-contextualisation through the study of two sectors would call for replications in other sectors and other national contexts.

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APPENDIX: STATISTICAL DATA ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS IN SWEDEN

Table 1. Total employment from 15 to 74 years in all activities and in the construction and hotel-restaurant sectors (unit: thousands)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
All activities												
Whole workforce	4593	4499	4524	4626	4657	4705	4772	4837	4910	5022	5097	5132
Women	2171	2140	2130	2188	2215	2237	2270	2307	2348	2393	2429	2438
Men	2422	2359	2394	2438	2442	2468	2502	2530	2562	2629	2668	2693
Construction												
Whole workforce	305	294	302	310	317	317	317	313	328	342	349	361
Women	24	21	22	24	29	28	27	26	31	34	33	30
Men	281	272	280	286	289	288	290	287	297	309	316	331
Accommodation and food												
Whole workforce	148	144	154	145	146	154	159	167	173	176	173	165
Women	83	78	82	80	82	84	84	87	90	90	90	80
Men	65	66	71	65	64	70	75	80	83	86	83	85

Source: Eurostat (lfsa_egan2)

Table 2. Unemployment (percentage of active population from 15 to 74 years)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
9.6	10.1	8.8	7.3	5.5	4.9	5.1	5.7	6.5	7.5	7.1	6.2
2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
6.2	8.4	8.6	7.8	8.0	8.1	8.0	7.4	7.0	6.7	6.4	6.8

Source: Eurostat (une_rt_a)

Table 3. Employment status by sex and in the whole workforce in all activities and in the construction and hotel-restaurant sectors (percentage of total employment)

Second job: persons who have a second job

temporary agency: Persons employed by temporary work agencies

Own-account work: persons who are self-employed without employees

Precarious work: persons who have short-term contract whose duration does not exceed 3 months

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
All activities												
Whole workforce												
Part time*	26.6	27.0	27.0	26.5	26.4	26.2	26.1	25.9	25.5	25.1	24.4	24.3
Temporary work*	14.4	13.6	14.6	15.2	14.7	15.1	15.7	15.4	15.1	15.2	15.2	14.9
Precarious work	5.0	4.8	5.3	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.0	4.7	3.9	3.8	3.8	4.0
Temporary agency	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.3
Second job*	8.2	8.2	8.4	8.5	8.5	8.9	9.2	9.0	8.8	8.8	8.7	9.1
Self employment*	10.2	10.5	10.7	10.2	10.2	10.4	10.1	10.0	9.7	9.6	9.5	9.6
own-account work*	6.4	6.7	6.8	6.5	6.4	6.6	6.5	6.4	6.1	6.0	5.9	6.0
Women												
Part time*	41.4	41.2	41.0	40.1	39.6	38.7	38.3	37.4	36.8	35.6	34.6	34.0
Temporary work*	17.6	16.5	17.1	17.8	17.4	17.9	18.2	17.6	17.2	17.4	17.5	17.2
Precarious work	5.9	5.6	6.0	5.9	5.9	5.8	5.8	5.2	4.4	4.2	4.3	4.5
Temporary agency	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.0
Second job*	8.0	7.9	8.0	8.3	8.2	8.4	8.8	8.8	8.3	8.3	8.5	9.2
Self employment*	5.6	6.0	6.2	5.8	5.7	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.8	5.5	5.4	5.4
own-account work*	4.1	4.4	4.5	4.2	4.0	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.0	3.9	3.9
Men												
Part time*	13.3	14.2	14.5	14.2	14.5	14.9	15.1	15.5	15.2	15.5	15.2	15.6
Temporary work*	11.5	11.0	12.4	12.8	12.2	12.6	13.3	13.4	13.1	13.2	13.1	12.9
Precarious work	4.0	4.1	4.6	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.2	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.5
Temporary agency	1.4	1.1	1.2	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.5
Second job*	8.3	8.4	8.8	8.6	8.7	9.5	9.6	9.2	9.3	9.2	8.9	8.9
Self employment*	14.2	14.6	14.7	14.2	14.3	14.3	13.9	13.7	13.3	13.3	13.3	13.4
own-account work*	8.5	8.8	8.9	8.7	8.7	8.6	8.5	8.4	7.9	7.8	7.8	7.9

Source: Eurostat

Table 3. Continuation.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Construction												
Whole workforce												
Part time*	8.6	7.3	8.1	8.3	8.4	8.8	7.5	7.3	7.5	8.3	7.9	7.9
Temporary work*	7.5	7.4	8.5	7.8	7.3	7.4	8.0	7.6	6.6	6.7	7.0	6.6
Self employment*	19.2	20.4	21.1	21.0	20.7	20.5	20.5	19.8	20.0	20.1	20.3	19.9
own-account work*	11.7	12.3	12.3	12.1	10.9	11.3	12.0	11.1	10.5	10.7	10.6	10.3
Women												
Part time*	38.7	34.7	29.1	31.9	32.9	31.1	29.1	30.4	28.0	25.8	22.3	29.0
Temporary work*		11.7	13.5	7.7	12.2	11.0	9.1	11.0	6.8	6.5	10.4	9.0
Self employment*			7.2	7.2	8.4	7.8	8.7	11.0	12.1	9.8	8.6	8.3
own-account work*								4.6	5.9	4.7	4.6	
Men												
Part time*	6.0	5.2	6.5	6.3	6.0	6.7	5.5	5.2	5.4	6.4	6.4	5.9
Temporary work*	7.4	7.1	8.1	7.7	6.8	7.0	7.9	7.3	6.6	6.7	6.6	6.4
Self employment*	20.0	21.4	22.2	22.1	21.9	21.7	21.5	20.6	20.8	21.3	21.4	21.0
own-account work*	12.3	12.9	12.9	12.9	11.6	12.2	12.7	11.8	11.0	11.3	11.2	10.8
Accommodation and food services												
Whole workforce												
Part time*	45.6	45.4	43.9	43.1	46.1	45.8	43.4	43.0	43.7	44.0	44.5	47.0
Temporary work*	34.8	34.1	34.1	34.1	35.3	35.6	35.2	33.3	32.9	34.5	35.0	35.7
Self employment*	15.3	15.9	17.3	15.5	13.2	13.7	13.8	14.1	13.1	12.1	12.5	15.0
own-account work*	4.5	4.6	5.2	4.5	3.2	3.4	4.0	4.4	4.2	3.6	3.1	3.3
Women												
Part time*	56.0	55.0	52.5	51.8	55.4	55.1	53.9	52.5	53.6	53.8	54.3	58.4
Temporary work*	42.1	38.8	36.8	38.4	38.7	39.9	40.2	37.8	37.0	39.4	39.4	42.0
Self employment*	7.0	10.1	11.7	10.3	8.2	8.1	8.9	10.4	8.7	5.9	6.1	8.3
own-account work*		3.7	5.1	4.0	2.7	2.6	2.9	3.5	3.5	2.4	1.9	2.9
Men												
Part time*	32.3	33.9	34.1	32.2	33.9	34.8	31.6	32.7	33.0	33.8	33.9	36.4
Temporary work*	25.5	28.6	30.9	28.8	31.0	30.2	29.6	28.4	28.4	29.3	30.1	29.9
Self employment*	25.8	22.9	23.7	22.0	20.0	20.5	19.1	18.2	17.6	18.5	19.5	21.4
own-account work*	6.4	5.5	5.3	5.1	3.8	4.1	5.1	5.5	4.9	4.8	4.3	3.8

* Own computations based on the quantities for each category provided by Eurostat and with reference to the data related to “total employment” extracted for employees from 15 to 74 years from the data basis lfsa_egan2 from Eurostat.

Note: Data related to “temporary work”, “second job”, “self employment” are respectively from the data bases lfsa_etgan2, lfsa_e2ged, lfsa_esgan2 and they are all extracted for employees from 15 to 74 years.

Data related to “part-time work” are from the data basis lfsa_epgan2 that does not allow to extract data by age and that is the only data basis allowing to extract data related to part time specifically in the accommodation and food

services activities. The observation was made that the data related to “total employment” extracted from lfsa_egan2 were exactly the same as the data related to “total employment” in the data basis lfsa_epgan2 where data related to part-time work were extracted. Therefore, the proportion could be calculated with reference to the same data “total employment” as proportions for other categories.

Data related to temporary work and precarious work are from the data basis lfsa_qoe_4a6r2 and lfsa_qoe_4ax1r2. They are originally in percentage and are extracted for employees 15 years and over.



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